PARADOX WITHOUT ANGUISH

A CRITICAL STUDY OF MARTIN BUBER'S

EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AND ETHICS

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation correlates the influential dialogic philosophy of the contemporary German Jewish existential thinker, Martin Buber, with his highly individualized interpretation of Judaism, based almost exclusively on his reading of Old Testament Prophecy and Hasidism.

The work is divided into an introduction and three parts. The Introduction pays tribute to the greatness of Buber's total achievement which embraces a wide variety of fields. It delimits the study and calls attention to some singular aspects of Buber's career, especially that of his profoundly Jewish thought being more influential in Christian than in Jewish circles. The title, "A Prophet in Philosophical Clothing," derives from the hortatory power of his prophetic mission, which in philosophical contexts sometimes leads him to employ declamation in lieu of cognitive argument.

Part One deals with Buber's dialogic thought, the philosophy of "I and Thou," set in the context of the immediate personal intuition of reality which characterizes all Existentialists. Buber's basic intuition is of the "other" concretely bodied over against the self, a "Thou" with whom one enters into an exclusive, immediate, non-utilitarian relation

whose spontaneity frees it from the causal sequence of time-space. The paradigm for this relation is love between man and wife, and it is the bearer of the meaning of life. Contrasted with it is man's only other basic approach to being, the detached, orderable, verifiable, knowledge of an object, of an "It" that can be used.

Part Two presents Buber's view of revelation as a dialogic encounter between man and the eternal "Thou"—God, an encounter which even in its biblical form is continuous with the "I-Thou" encounters of every day life. Israel received revelation as a people—they were to realize the divine demand by establishing a community of justice and truth. The community is also central to the faith of Israel as the bearer of the revelatory tradition which the individual appropriates. His treatment of revelation owes much to Kierkegaard, especially in its insistence on a personal appropriation of the truths of revelation which yields no objective certainty. The individual must affirm these truths in "holy insecurity," recognizing that life can afford him no guarantee against error and meaninglessness.

Buber's elaboration of the content of revelation abounds in paradoxes. However, his affirmation of the paradoxes of faith utterly lacks the agonized quality found in statements of them by Kierkegaard and other Pauline thinkers, and since the same distinction prevails in his ethical thought, this dissertation is called Paradox Without Anguish.

In Part Three Buber's dialogic exposition of ethics and the relation between ethics and religion is studied. His ethics emphasizes creative spontaneity in response to concrete situations—an emphasis which brings him perilously close to antinomianism. But by insisting that love between God and man and between man and man is the basis of both religion and ethics,

and by claiming that love is an ontological relation, he tries to arrive at an ontological level which at once overcomes the antinomian tendency of his ethic of responsibility, and the possibility of conflict between religion and ethics.

Buber's optimistic view of man's capacity to fulfil the divine demand is contrasted with Reinhold Niebuhr's paradoxical view of man's inevitable involvement in sin—a view which emphasizes man's need for divine grace far more than does Buber, who again presents Paradoxes Without Anguish.

Buber, as all Existentialists, faces the problem of communicating his personal intuition of existence to men who do not share his perspectives. Throughout the work—in the context of his philosophy of "I and Thou," his existential view of revelation, and his ethic of responsibility—his attempts to move beyond existential statement to ontology are contrasted with those of Paul Tillich. It is concluded that the latter's method of cognitive argument is more appropriate to this task than is Buber's method of prophetic pronouncement.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Critical evaluation often requires more detailed argument and emphasis than does exposition and agreement. This is unfortunate, for the study which follows may not fully express the extent of my concurrence with the fundamental perspectives of Martin Buber's thought, or my gratitude for all that it has taught me.

Only those who have themselves received the generous assistance of Professor Horace L. Friess of Columbia University can appreciate the extent of my gratitude to him for his careful readings and criticisms of this work at each stage of its progress.

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experience and a great deal of the perspectives of this study, as well as its impetus, derive from it.

Dr. Maurice S. Friedman of Sarah Lawrence College has first brought the totality of Buber's achievement before the English-speaking world. His outgoingness in assisting those who have followed in the path of his studies show him to be a genuine disciple of Martin Buber—a disciple in deed as well as thought.

Mr. Hans Weber of the Department of Modern Languages at Princeton University helped me cope with some of the problems posed by Buber's highly individuated use of German. Mrs. James Webber's willing cooperation greatly expedited the preparation of the manuscript.

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INTRODUCTION

A PROPHET IN PHILOSOPHICAL CLOTHING

Martin Buber must be numbered among those outstanding contemporary figures who combine great breadth of interest with thoroughgoing scholarship and profound insight. Whether writing on the philosophy of art or social philosophy, the Bible or Vedanta, or any number of other disciplines, Buber's work is worthy of attention from specialists in each of these fields. The brilliance of his work in so many different areas must be attributed to his peculiar genius, but a brief sketch of his background and career may help in understanding its wide scope and peculiar intensity.

Buber's family and the environment of his early years provided him with the basis for a most vital form of Jewish orientation. He was born in 1878 and raised in the Galician home of his grandfather, Solomon Buber, until he was fourteen years of age. The peculiar richness of this environment exposed him to the influence of two highly significant Jewish movements, the Haskalah and Hasidism.[1]

Solomon Buber was an outstanding figure of the Haskalah, the Jewish enlightenment. This movement shared the aims and enthusiasms of its European counterpart—the confidence in reason, the universalism of its ethical concerns and its deep love of learning. Yet the Jewish enlightenment embraced these

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[1] For a more extensive description, see Hans Kohn, Martin Buber: Sein Werk und seine Zeit, Ein Versuch uber Religion und Politik (Hellerau: Verlag Jakob Hegner, 1930), pp. 13-18.

ideals with even greater fervor since its adherents were plunging into the main stream of European culture after centuries of isolation in the ghettos. Love of learning, of course, was no new development in Jewish life; it had been manifested during many centuries of intense study of the Talmud, but the Haskalah brought the technical apparatus of modern scholarship and its uncompromising critical spirit to Jewish studies. Buber's grandfather concentrated on the Midrash and compiled what is now the standard edition of many sections of its literature. Thus through being exposed to the ideals of the Haskalah Buber acquired a love of Judaism that was neither exclusive nor narrow, but one which involved a fresh look at Judaism in the context of world history and world affairs.

An education in the home of Solomon Buber quite naturally provided his grandson with a mastery of the languages necessary for studying almost all Jewish writings in their original form. Yet it provided him with something even greater—an example of dedicated thorough scholarship in a man who was broad in spirit, rich in the love of Judaism, and zealous in learning.

While Buber's boyhood nourished him in the attitudes of the Haskalah, of a Judaism which was turned toward the world, it also provided him with strong impressions of Hasidism, a Jewish movement of fervent piety which was profoundly inbred and isolated from European culture. The historical background of the movement is rooted in the seventeenth century when the vitality of Judaism in Eastern Europe and the Near East had been vitiated by a rabbinic legalism which was detached from the deep human aspirations of the people, while on the social level the rabbinic scholars formed an onerous intellectual aristocracy. Furthermore, centuries of ghetto life had deprived the Jews of all rapport with the natural world, of all delight in its glories. The

situation was ripe for overreactions, and they came, almost disastrously. A false Messiah, Sabbatai Zevi, had succeeded in rallying thousands of adherents among Jews of all countries and of all classes so that his later apostasy to Islam hit the Jewish world community with a shuddering impact. As part of the violent disillusionment of the Jewish community with this apostate Messiah, many esoteric cults developed which employed the secret lore of Jewish mysticism to antinomian ends, and so invested their licentious practices with religious sanctions.

In his article on "The Beginnings of Hasidism"[1] (the name of this movement is derived from the Hebrew word, hasid, meaning pious), Buber writes about Jacob Frank, the demonic leader of the worst of these cults, who claimed to be the true and living God. The founder of Hasidism, Israel ben Eliezer (1700-1760), generally known as the Baal Shem Tov, the Master of the Good Name, is introduced as a radical contrast to the demonic Frank. Buber claims that the Baal Shem Tov instituted a movement which reacted to the Sabbatian crisis by revitalizing some of the best elements in the Jewish tradition. The movement was not concerned with developing an ideology, but derived its power from the quality of its leaders (called Zaddikim, literally righteous ones), and the richness of the communal life that developed around them.

Buber presents the Baal Shem Tov, who established the pattern of hasidic leadership, as a figure of the religious type of Jesus of Nazareth: a religious leader who is no scholar, and who develops no written body of teachings, but who brings his message directly to the people by means of

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[1] Martin Buber, "The Beginnings of Hasidism, "trans. Dr. Greta Hort and Canon Witton-Davies, Hasidism (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), pp. 1-33.

parables and homilies, and whose most effective teaching is rooted in the power of his presence and the greatness of his example. Buber says: "The Baalshem himself belongs to those central figures in the history of religion who have done their work by living a certain way. . . .The life of such people stands in need of a theological commentary. . ."[1]

In this case the hasidic movement provided that commentary, and Buber has written extensively about its contents. Since these writings will receive extensive consideration throughout the course of this work, it is important for the reader to note that no attempt at assessing the accuracy of Buber's interpretation of hasidic teachings will be made. Such an evaluation, which would involve a comparison of Buber's presentation of hasidic teachings with that of other interpreters of the movement, as well as with its source materials, lies outside the scope of this study. Instead, this thesis will deal with the relations between his own philosophy and the ideas he purports to find in Hasidism.

In his early years at the home of his grandfather, Martin Buber encountered many hasidic groups in the neighboring Galician villages. Although he describes these as "half-degenerate offshoots"[2] of the movement, which by this time had declined from the period of its greatness, which fell roughly between 1750 and 1825,[3] they nevertheless stamped strong impressions upon him, impressions that were to color all his subsequent work. A major one was the

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[1] Ibid., p. 2.

[2] Ibid., Forward (page unnumbered).

[3] Martin Buber, Tales of the Hasidim, The Later Masters, trans. Olga Marx (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), pp. 7-13.

sense of vitality found in the communal relationships within the movement.[1]

The hasidic communities were organized around the Zaddikim who were their living center and ". . .the most important thing about these Zaddikim is that each of them was surrounded by a community that lived a brotherly life, and who could live in this way because there was a leading person in their midst who brought each one nearer. . .to that in which they believed."[2] And that in which they believed was, of course, the God of Israel!

This communal pattern served as the model for the ideal of community that Buber was later to develop and express in the following words:

> The real essence of community is to be found in the fact—manifest or otherwise—that it has a centre. The real beginning of a community is when its members have a common relation to the centre overriding all other relations: the circle is described by the radii, not by the points along its circumference. And the originality of the centre cannot be discerned unless it is discerned as being transpicuous to the light of something divine.[3]

Turning now to his other strong boyhood impression of Hasidism, the teaching that "God can be seen in every thing and reached by every pure act,"[4] we find that Buber came to regard this as the essence of the hasidic message. For in this particular teaching of Hasidism, he sees the greatest attempt of Diaspora Judaism to fulfill the ancient mission of Israel, which he regards as the enduring mission of mankind: to realize God's purpose for man—the hallowing of the creation. With respect to the relation between this definitive hasidic

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[1]Martin Buber, "Mein Weg zum Chassidismus," Hinweise, Gesammelte Essays, 1910-1953 (Zurich: Manesse Verlag, 1953), pp. 181ff. (Also published in Martin Buber, Die Chassidischen Bücher [Hellerau: Verlag Jakob Hegner, 1933], pp. 665-672.)

[2]Buber, "The Beginnings of Hasidism," Hasidism, p. 4.

[3]Martin Buber, Paths in Utopia, trans. R. F. C. Hull (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1950), p. 135.

[4]Buber, "Mein Weg zum Chassidismus," Hinweise, p. 180. (my translation).

teaching and the ancient mission of Israel, Buber says:

> the hasidic conception of the Torah is a further development of the traditional belief that God wishes to use man in the conquest of the world which he has created. . . .The "mizvoth," the commandments, [of Mosaic Law] mark the sphere of the things which are already expressly given over to man for hallowing.[1]

And how is hallowing to be accomplished?

> He who does a mizvah with complete Kavanah,that is, performs an act in such a way that his whole existence is gathered in it and directed in it towards God, he works on the redemption of the world, on its conquest for God.[2]

Buber sums up the point when he adds that "the great Kavanah does not ally itself with any selection of what has been prescribed; everything which is done with that can be the right, the redeeming act."[3]

This teaching of "the hallowing of the every day" with its radical emphasis on the inner motivation of an act, rather than conformity to the external standards defined by the interpreters of the Talmud, might have led to a schism between Hasidism and rabbinic Judaism. In fact, in its early years the bitterness of the disputes between the Hasidim and their opponents was so great that the latter even invoked the aid of the civil governments of Eastern Europe in their attempts to crush the movement. Yet Hasidism survived these attacks, and instead of breaking with the main stream of Jewish orthodoxy it developed a great body of its own talmudic scholars while the hasidic masses

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[1]"The Beginnings of Hasidism," Hasidism, p. 26.

[2]Ibid., p. 27.

[3]Ibid., p. 28.

continued to practice the commandments of the Mosaic Law as these were interpreted by the talmudic tradition. And so the movement remains a branch of orthodox Judaism to the present day.

The next influence Buber encountered was that of the German academic tradition. After leaving his grandfather's home he studied at a Gymnasium and at the University of Vienna where his major work was done in philosophy and in the history of art, and he continued his studies in philosophy at the University of Berlin where he drank deeply of the wellsprings of German thought and acquired the rigorous standards of German scholarship.[1]

The post-Kantian situation was fundamental to his philosophical development. It seemed clear that man's mode of apprehending the universe endowed it with the order and form he experienced, and this led to a meta-physical skepticism regarding the possibility of man's gaining knowledge of any "thing-in-itself." Our discussion of the "Spheres of Relation" which obtain in Buber's dialogic philosophy will show how Buber attempts to go beyond Kant's position.

Hegel's idealism, the greatest effort to reconstitute the claims of speculative reason in the post-Kantian period, evoked so many antithetical reactions that in the end, it only intensified the situation of speculative skepticism. Simmel and Dilthey, two of Buber's teachers, exerted a strong philosophical influence upon him by mediating the central concerns of one of these reactions, namely, Nietzsche's vitalistic, anti-speculative, concretizing thought. Thus Buber's early work is marked by a concern with life-affirming

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[1]Maurice S. Friedman, Martin Buber: Mystic, Existentialist, Social Prophet—A Study in the Redemption of Evil, Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Chicago, June, 1950 (The University of Chicago Library, Microfilm No. T809), pp. 6-25; see also, Kohn, op. cit., pp. 18-55.

creativity and particularly with a concern for the realization of philosophical goals in concrete cultural forms. He was deeply troubled by the fact that creativity involved the imposition of form upon the form-resisting stuff of existence, yet the process seemed to result in the production of static cultural patterns which resisted any attempt at dynamic creative renewal. He regarded rabbinic Judaism as a prime example of this cultural rigidity, and we shall see that this attitude was determinative for his position on Mosaic Law through all the stages of his thought.

While their mediation of the perspectives of Nietzsche was of great significance, Dilthey and Simmel also influenced Buber in terms of their own perspectives. Dilthey provided Buber with the impetus towards a philosophical anthropology that would attempt to answer Kant's fourth question, "What is Man?",[1] by means of the concrete materials provided by the "Human Studies" (Geisteswisseschaften). This concern remained a central one in Buber's later thought, and his most recent work in the field emphasizes Dilthey's contrast between the findings of these "Human Studies" and the natural sciences (Naturwissenschaften).[2]

Simmel provided Buber with prefigurations of two central categories of his dialogic thought, namely, the emphasis on relation and on the "coincidence of opposites of feeling" (coincidentia oppositorum). For man in relation is the root category for Buber's understanding of the meaning of human existence, whereas the sense of the oppositions of feeling which coincide in lived

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[1]Martin Buber, "What is Man?", Between Man and Man, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1947), pp. 118-205.

[2]Martin Buber, Der Mensch und sein Gebild (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1955), especially section 3, pp. 20-26.

experience lies at the heart of Buber's paradoxical religious affirmations.[1]

Yet the very same drive toward concrete cultural actualizations of philosophical perspectives which Dilthey and Simmel inspired in him led Buber to formulations of his thought that continually moved away from their emphases. For his concrete cultural actualization of thought led him to an existential Jewish commitment that stood for involvement in culture—a speaking from within—rather than for the method of comparing cultures with an attitude of detachment. From the time of I and Thou, when his thought attained decisive clarity,[2] his increasing preoccupation has been that of relating truth as he encounters it in the Jewish tradition to the understanding of man.[3] His philosophical studies have certainly influenced his reading of the Jewish tradition, but the thrust of his work was directed ever more intently upon that tradition so that, in the long run, he preserves only those emphases of his philosophical mentors which accord with the central truths he has found in Judaism.

Mysticism was a major current of German intellectual life at the turn of the century and Buber was strongly influenced by his extensive readings in it, especially in the Jewish, German, Vedantic, and Daoist mystical literature. His early concern was the problem of unity—unity between man and Being and unity within the self—was expressed in a wide variety of terms which borrowed liberally from these mystical traditions. However, he became disenchanted with the language and perspectives of mysticism. He came to see its claim to union

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[1] Martin Buber, I and Thou, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937), pp. 78-82, 95f.

[2] Maurice S. Friedman, Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 52.

[3] Ibid., p. 257.

with Being as an illusion since the separated-self still persists; he came to sense its claim to unity within the self as excessively subjectivized; he came to regard its very preoccupation with unity as one which failed to do justice to the multiplicity of existence. Furthermore, he was disenchanted with the mystical moments of ecstasy because they were not organically related to the life of each man in the routine of his daily existence.[1] Maurice S. Friedman has meticulously traced this development of Buber's thought from mysticism to the relational categories of I and Thou in a section of his dissertation aptly titled, "From Unity to Relation."[2]

Another aspect of Buber's multifaceted genius appears in his social thought, and the thorough scholarship he brings to his studies of socialism is accompanied by a passion for the realization of true community, of socialism and freedom.[3] For Buber, this involved a socialism that is religiously grounded and he maintained contact with the various religious socialists who were working in Germany at that time.[4] Paul Tillich has summarized Buber's position regarding religious socialism:

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[1]Buber, I and Thou, pp. 83-96; see also, "Dialogue," Between Man and Man, pp. 13f.

[2]Friedman, Martin Buber: Mystic, Existentialist, Social Prophet, pp. 53-210; see also, Friedman, The Life of Dialogue, pp. 25-53.

[3]Buber's social philosophy is represented in English translation by one major work, Paths in Utopia, but for a recent supplement of considerable significance, see Martin Buber, "Society and the State," World Review (Incorpbrating Review of Reviews) (May, 1951), pp. 5-12.

[4]Buber's relations with the various forms of German socialistic thought during the first two decades of this century are detailed throughout Kohn, op. cit., see especially, pp. 28-36, 151-161, 186-223. For a brief presentation and criticism of Buber's religious socialism, see Will Herberg, "Socialism with Freedom," Book Review of Paths in Utopia by Martin Buber, Commentary, X (September, 1950), 289-291.

> Buber, like all religious socialists, accepts the criticism of bourgeois society by Marx while rejecting the anti-religious bias of Marxism. He accepts, with all religious socialists, Marx's doctrine of the self-estrangement of man in modern capitalism. . .but, like all religious socialists, he rejects the belief of Marxism that a special group, the proletariat, its revolutionary victory, and the new institutions following this victory, will bring about a change in human nature.[1]

Socialism, in Buber's view, could only be produced by small groups, by communities who realize socialism in themselves and go towards it in their personal life, as in the Kibbutzim in Israel.[2] However, he regards the attainment of true community as a Messianic category whose fulfillment cannot be brought about within history by the state.[3] This distrust of the state has persisted in Buber's thought to the present,[4] and it has also exerted a profound influence on his Zionist thought, for he has always been extremely critical of the political manifestations of the movement.

It was as a Zionist pamphleteer that Buber made his earliest impact upon the public. He assumed the post of editor of Die Wiener Welt in 1901, in which capacity he worked closely with Theodore Herzl. Buber soon found the exclusively political Zionism of Herzl too constricting and so broke with the founder of the movement to assume the role of tormentor of its conscience, a role he retains to this day. Of this aspect of Buber's life work, Mordecai Kaplan writes: "Buber might well say with Socrates, 'I am the Gadfly that God has sent to you, and all day long and in all places I am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you.'"[5]

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[1] Paul Tillich, "Martin Buber and Christian Thought," Commentary, V (June, 1948), 521.

[2] Paths in Utopia, pp. 139-149. [3] Tillich, op.cit., p. 521.

[4] "Society and the State," op. cit.; "Geltung und Grenze des Politischen Prinzips," Hinweise, pp. 330-346; Paths in Utopia, pp. 104, 129-138.

[5] Mordecai Kaplan, "Martin Buber: Theologian, Philosopher and Prophet," The Reconstructionist, XVIII (May 2, 1952), 9.

Buber has never been able to give his heart to a Zionism whose sole aim was the establishment of a national homeland, a political state. He has spoken with great power of the sense in which 'Zion' has through the ages become the object of popular hope and yearning for the Jewish people, a symbol of perfection which stands for the substance of the land of Israel:

> 'Zion' means what is intended by this land and what it is to become. Whoever loves Zion, loves a potential perfection and is bound to help make this potentiality a reality. This in itself implies that it is not a question of a spiritual essence, of a pure idea far removed from the political sphere: the 'political' is a precondition of the realization of the ideal, no less but also no more. For political Zionism the state is the goal and Zion a 'myth' which merely fires the masses; for the lover of Zion. . .the state is merely the way to the goal called Zion.[1]

In 1916, Buber made common cause with other Zionists who were also dissatisfied with the exclusively political form of the movement, and founded the periodical Der Jude, which he edited through 1924. In its pages Buber wrote many articles in which he called for a Jewish renaissance.[2] This renaissance could not occur without a Jewish homeland any more than the soul could exist without the body, and this was the basis for Buber's passionate Zionism. However, Zionism for Buber simply could not be extirpated from the totality of activities that made up the Jewish spirit, and especially from the ancient Jewish longing for the realization of a community of righteousness.

Buber worked prolifically during the first quarter of this century in many fields besides Zionism. He wrote extensively during these years on the philosophy of art, on mysticism, and on mythology. However, five years

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[1]Martin Buber, Isreal and Palestine, The History of an Idea, trans. Stanley Goodman (London: East and West Library, 1952), p. 144.

[2]These are collected in two volumes: Martin Buber, Die Jüdische Bewegung, Gesammelte Aufsätze und Ansprachen, Vol. I, 1900-1914 (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1916), Vol. II, 1916-1920 (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1921).

(1904-1909) of this extended period were spent in withdrawal, while Buber immersed himself in the study of hasidic sources. His great interpretive studies and translations of the materials of this movement began in 1906 with the appearance of Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman,[1] and have continued down to the recent past with the appearance of the two volumes of Tales of the Hasidim which he completed in the summer of 1946.[2]

Beyond a doubt, the most significant achievement of the years from the turn of the century until his departure from Der Jude in 1924 was the development of Buber's dialogic philosophy. This philosophy was fully expounded in I and Thou, and because the title suggests the key idea of the book, his thought is also called the philosophy of "I and Thou." The work, which was begun in 1916, first came before the public in 1923, although a private printing had appeared in 1919.[3] The decisive clarity and maturity which Buber's thought attained in I and Thou was, as we have noted, marked by a shift from unity to relation as the central category of his thought. This shift enabled him to bring his social concerns, such as socialism and Zionism, into more intimate relation with his theoretical work on philosophy and religion.

Buber's departure from Der Jude marked the end of his career as a active Zionist leader. From that time on he concentrated upon academic endeavors; his major work being the amplification and application of his dialogic philosophy, and the translation and interpretation of the Old

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[1] Buber, "Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman," Die Chassidischen Bücher, pp. 1-123. Shortly to appear in English as The Stories of Rabbi Nachman (New York: Horizon Press).

[2] Martin Buber, Tales of the Hasidim, The Early Masters, trans. Olga Marx (New York: Schocken Books, 1947); Buber, The Later Masters.

[3] Friedman, The Life of Dialogue, p. 52.

Testament. The translation, upon which he collaborated with Franz Rosenzweig until the latter's death in 1929, attempted to render the Old Testament in "Hebraicized" German. After Rosenzweig's death Buber completed the translation, and continued his biblical studies with a number of penetrating volumes of exegesis.

The breadth of Buber's religious concerns led him to study Christian thought, and his involvement with religious socialism brought him into friendly relation with many Christian socialists. These contacts inspired him to write extensively on the relations between Judaism and Christianity.[1] This universalistic impulse, ever an active element in his work, was given expression in the years 1926 to 1930 when he re-entered the editorial field as one of the editors of Die Kreatur. His co-editors were a Protestant and a Catholic and they tried to apply those teachings that Judaism and Christianity share to social and pedagogical problems connected with religion.

In the years 1923 to 1933, Buber occupied a chair in Jewish philosophy of religion and ethics at the University of Frankfurt. Later his work at Frankfurt was expanded to include the history of religions. From 1933 until 1938, he occupied the post of Director of the Central Office for Jewish Adult Education in Germany. During those years of crisis he witnessed in prophetic fashion to his faith in God and to his faith in the mission of the Jewish people.[2]

In 1938, Buber left for Palestine where he became professor of social philosophy at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In 1949, he

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[1] For Buber's description of his sympathetic relationship to Christianity, see Martin Buber, Two Types of Faith, trans. Norman P. Goldhawk (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1951), pp. 12-15.

[2] See Martin Buber, Die Stunde und die Erkenntnis, Reden und Aufsätze, 1933-1935 (Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1936); see also, Ernest M. Wolf, "Martin Buber and German Jewry," Judaism, I (October, 1952), 346-352.

established an Institute for Adult Education and, on his retirement from his chair at the University in 1951, the government of Israel requested that he greatly increase its size. The Institute played a vital role in helping to integrate the great numbers of immigrants to Israel, and it was closed in 1954, following the cessation of mass immigration.[1]

This sketch of Buber's background, interests, and career suggests the great diversity to be found in his writings. A major object of this study will be to point to those themes which reveal their basic unity—a unity of purpose. The title of this Introduction, "A Prophet in Philosophical Clothing," is an attempt to convey a sense of that purpose—the interpretation of the ancient message of Israel in language that will communicate its substance to modern, philosophically oriented men and the exhortation of those same men to respond to it. To be sure, Maurice Friedman has correctly asserted that there is a "dialectic between Buber as original thinker and Buber as interpreter of tradition,"[2] but the motive power of his thought, derives from his prophetic mission, and, as we have already remarked, his mature work, from the time of I and Thou, has interacted ever more intimately with the Jewish tradition. In fact, Franz Rosenzweig insists that Buber's preface to Reden über das Judentum,[3] written at the time of the publication of I and Thou, constitutes a confession of Buber's conversion to a more traditional

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[1] Friedman, The Life of Dialogue, p. 8.

[2] Ibid., p. viii.

[3] Martin Buber, Reden über das Judentum, collected edition (Frankfurt A. M.: Rutten & Loening, 1923).

and deeprooted Jewish commitment.[1]

Thus the theological task of interpreting the biblical perspectives has been an increasingly significant facet of Buber's thought. It is important to recognize this because Buber has achieved his greatest renown as a philosopher, and because his dialogic philosophy is expressed in such strikingly original language that it may be regarded as an instance of philosophical speculation wrought with complete independence of the Jewish tradition. In the Translator's Introduction to the English edition of I and Thou, Ronald Gregor Smith explicitly warns the reader against a purely philosophical approach to this work:

> I and Thou is to be understood in the context of Buber's previous intensive study, chiefly of Jewish mystical writings. It is not an isolated phenomenon among his works, but represents the culmination of the intensely religious interest that characterises them all. It is, indeed, philosophical; but it is not an academic work of discursive philosophy.[2]

Despite this warning, a prominent Jewish scholar, Jacob B. Agus, treats the work as "a system of metaphysics" without making any attempt to relate it to Buber's interpretation of Judaism which he treats in another section of his chapter on Buber's writings.[3] Even when Agus considers the explicitly religious section of I and Thou he treats it as a program for a new type of mystical religiosity, and he persists in his failure to relate it to Buber's writings on Judaism! Buber's dialogic thought is simply not to be understood in this way.[4]

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[1]Franz Rosenzweig, "The Builders," On Jewish Learning, trans. and ed. N. N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1955), pp. 72ff.

[2]I and Thou, p. v.

[3]Jacob B. Agus, Modern Philosophies of Judaism, A Study of Recent Jewish Philosophies of Religion (New York: Behrman's Jewish Book House, 1941), pp. 211-279, see especially, p. 238.

[4]Friedman, The Life of Dialogue, p. 257.

In speaking of Buber under the different headings of philosopher, theologian, and prophet, Mordecai Kaplan says that "as theologian, Buber has translated into the language of our day the biblical religion of Mosaicism and Prophetism."[1] It is important that we recognize that the same holds true of Buber as a philosopher. In fairness to Professor Kaplan, one must note that he claims that Buber's work is the product of one organic will, yet he still discusses the two aspects of Buber's work with too much emphasis on their separateness.

At this point, in support of a theological interpretation of Buber's writings on philosophy, we may note that they have made little impact upon secular philosophers; their widest audience is found among theologians. Maurice Friedman's extensive list of thinkers who have been influenced by Buber's theory of knowledge consists almost exclusively of theologians,[2] and he would be hard pressed to find Buber's epistemology, or any other aspect of his thought, influencing any significant number of secular philosophers of comparable stature. For secular thinkers would either be unfamiliar with the religious framework of Buber's purportedly philosophical writings, or they would be fundamentally at odds with it.

Turning to Buber's frequent addresses to the Jewish community in which he repeatedly exhorts this community to fulfil the Jewish mission, we come to an aspect of his work that is certainly prophetic in character. This was affirmed at a public meeting held in Buber's honor at the end of his extended visit to the United States in 1952. Mordecai Kaplan said: ". . .Buber

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[1] Kaplan, op. cit., p. 8.

[2] Friedman, The Life of Dialogue, pp. 162f.

like the prophets of old, has had to give articulate voice to its [Israel's] conscience. He castigates his fellow-Jews for having '. . .failed to establish the throne of the true God.'"[1]

During his stay in America, Buber had provided ample evidence of his prophetic power, as he assessed the Jewish achievement of re-establishing a Jewish nation-state. He did not speak with satisfaction of what had already been accomplished, but voiced his fear that the Jewish ideal had become subservient to political reality, a theme that we have already noted was prominent in all his writings on Zionism. Buber was still demanding the realization of the true ideal of Jewish civilization, that is, ". . .the fulfillment of God's truth and justice on earth," and he added that ". . .it is a difficult, a tremendously difficult undertaking, to drive the plowshare of the normative principle into the hard sod of political fact; but the right to lift a historical moment into the light of superhistory can be bought no cheaper."[2]

In this word of exhortation we see the combination of universalism and nationalism that is so characteristic of the Prophets. Israel is to fulfill her own mission, but this fulfillment will be in the name of establishing truth and justice on earth. Yet in spite of the power of Buber's prophetic exhortation, despite the fact that such words are much needed today, his hortatory impulses have at times betrayed him into an excessively voluntaristic view of

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[1] Kaplan, op. cit., p. 9.

[2] Martin Buber, "Judaism and Civilization," At the Turning (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952), p. 24.

man's ethical situation. In the final chapter of this study, we shall see that this voluntaristic note is inconsistent with the major emphases of his dialogic thought.

There are other implications involved in the designation of Buber as "A Prophet in Philosophical Clothing." We have already noted that one implication of the phrase concerns a major aim of his work: to proclaim the ancient message of Israel to modern men in language that will be comprehensible to them. Another implication concerns his execution of this task.

Buber's dialogic philosophy is faithful to those perspectives which he claims to find in the Jewish tradition, but in conveying this message in his philosophical writings, he often employs the technique of his biblical exegesis and his interpretations of Hasidism. Perhaps the best illustration of his exegetical technique occurs in his discussion of the concept of divine love in Hosea when he says: "All this is indeed very anthropomorphic, but I think that if Hosea had to explain the matter to us in terms of our conceptions . . ."[1] To explain the matter to us in terms of our conceptions ! This is just what Hosea, of course, cannot do, and so Buber does it for him. In other contexts, for example where he interprets some of the moral perspectives found in the Psalms, Buber in using the phrase "to translate into modern forms of speech,"[2] or again, "in the language of modern thought,"[3] is consciously employing this technique. He also employs it in his interpretations of Hasidism where he takes the concept of "alien thoughts" and refers to them

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[1]Martin Buber, The Prophetic Faith, trans. Carlyle Witton-Davies (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 113.

[2]Martin Buber, "Right and Wrong," trans. Ronald Gregor Smith, Good and Evil (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 28.

[3]Ibid., p. 39.

"in our language" as those phantasies which distract us from the quest for truth.[1] However, it will be demonstrated that his dialogic philosophy liberally employs this same technique, an assertion to which Buber, in all probability, would strongly object. For in his philosophical writings he is presumably unrestricted by the binding character of a religious commitment.

In calling Buber "A Prophet in Philosophical Clothing," there is no intention of challenging his philosophical competence. Many of his essays reveal a superb dialectical acumen and a mastery of the history of philosophy.[2] However, the hortatory nature of Buber's prophetic enterprize often leads him to use assertion in lieu of cognitive argument in philosophical contexts. The point is best stated by Paul Tillich in his comments on I and Thou, which he says is ". . .a most important and influential philosophy of religion—if this term can be used for a small book which is at least as much a religious pronouncement as it is a cognitive analysis."[3] Tillich's own mode of thought is most emphatically one of cognitive analysis and the extended comparisons of the ontological procedures of Buber and Tillich which will appear in this study will further clarify the description of Buber as "A Prophet in Philosophical Clothing."

The fundamental difference between these two thinkers is an obvious one: Tillich is a Protestant and Buber a Jewish thinker; Tillich is a profound

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[1] Buber, "The Foundation Stone," trans. Carlyle and Mary Witton-Davies, Hasidism, p. 50.

[2] See especially, Buber, "What is Man?", Between Man and Man, pp. 118-205, and "The Question to the Single One," ibid., pp. 40-81; and Martin Buber, "Religion and Modern Thinking," trans. Maurice S. Friedman, Eclipse of God, Studies in the Relation between Religion and Philosophy (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), pp. 85-122.

[3] Tillich, op. cit., p. 516.

interpreter of Pauline perspectives and Buber one of their sharpest critics. Yet Tillich has remarked upon their profound similarity:

> Although we met late in our lives, Martin Buber and I soon realized that there were many points of agreement in the deepest levels of our thought and spiritual passion. And it was not difficult to trace the common sources: the prophetic message of social justice as the criterion of political thinking and acting today; the mystical tradition—especially in the form into which it was cast by that unique Protestant mystic Jacob Boehme and his philosophical follower Schelling; the enthusiastic participation in the philosophical, artistic and educational movements between World War I and the victory of Nazism.[1]

A non-German reader must see a large measure of the striking similarity between these men as intimately related to their deep immersion in German intellectual life which accounts for the universality of their mutual interests in art, poetry, mythology, and all the variagated manifestations of culture. In other words, both are German men of letters in the fullest sense of the term.

Tillich alludes to the influence that German mysticism as mediated by Schelling exerted upon himself and Buber. German romanticism also played a role in shaping their thought, and their attitude toward nature reveals the extent of these influences. We shall see that Buber, in speaking of the possibility of mutuality in man's relations to a tree, all but claims that inanimate beings possess consciousness.[2] Tillich's work reveals a similar tendency, especially his sermon on Schelling's assertion that "nature also mourns for a lost good."[3] This profound sense of kinship with nature is deeply

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[1] Ibid., p. 515.

[2] I and Thou, p. 8.

[3] Paul Tillich, "Nature Also Mourns for a Lost Good," The Shaking of the Foundations (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 82.

embedded in the German cultural tradition and the statement that, "by an opposition of forces, construed according to Kant, Schelling considered that nature in its entire extent arises for us,"[1] might equally well have been applied to one aspect of Buber's latest treatment of the relations between man and nature.[2]

Buber and Tillich were both profoundly influenced by the work of Kierkegaard which appeared in German translation during the first decade of this century. This paved the way for their sympathetic participation in the revival of major motifs of theological orthodoxy which was initiated by the work of Karl Barth at the end of the first World War. Buber's religious Existentialism may be considered one facet of this revival, however, like Tillich, he would move beyond existential protest by providing ontological answers to it. It is in this respect that they will be compared throughout this work.

Turning again to a consideration of the prophetic character of Buber's work, we must note that the prophets of ancient Israel addressed their message to the nation. They spoke to all men, not merely to the powerful, to the wise, and to the representatives of official religion, and they spoke to men in terms of their daily pursuits. Thus Amos rebuked the merchants who observed the external forms of religion by abstaining from work on the Sabbath, but who could hardly wait for the end of the day so that they might again cheat the poor by using false balances.[3] So too, Buber, "A Prophet in Philosophical Clothing," regards his message as relevant for all men, and for men in the

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[1] Frederick de Wolfe Bolman, Jr., translator's introduction to Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, The Ages of the World (New York: Morningside Heights, Columbia University Press, 1942), p. 13.

[2] Buber, Der Mensch und sein Gebild, pp. 32f.

[3] Amos 8:4-6.

midst of their everyday concerns. The question of relevance will be examined in considerable detail in our discussion of Buber's ethics, but at this point we may simply note the forcefulness with which he insists that his dialogic message is addressed to all men, not, for example, to those who have mastered the discipline of philosophy.

> The life of dialogue is no privilege of intellectual activity like dialectic. It does not begin in the upper story of humanity. It begins no higher than where humanity begins. There are no gifted and ungifted here, only those who give themselves and those who withhold themselves.[1]

As the life of dialogue is not reserved for special men neither is it reserved for special occasions.

> You put before me the man taken up with duty and business. Yes, precisely him I mean, him in the factory, in the shop, in the office, in the mine, on the tractor, at the printing-press. . . .Dialogue is not an affair of spiritual luxury and spiritual luxuriousness, it is a matter of creation, of the creature, and he is that, the man of whom I speak, he is a creature, trivial and irreplaceable.[2]

Finally, we must remember that the biblical world view which the prophets share is one which presents the ultimate power of the universe in anthropomorphic terms. We have already noted Buber's awareness of this in his discussion of Hosea's concept of divine love. Buber says that if Hosea had to explain the matter to us in terms of our thought ". . .he would say that the theomorphism of man, that is to say the fact of God's image in him, has been preserved only by God's own becoming anthropomorphous over and over again. . ."[3]

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[1]Buber, "Dialogue," Between Man and Man, p. 35.

[2]Ibid.

[3]The Prophetic Faith, p. 113.

In the exposition of Buber's dialogic philosophy, we shall see that Buber's Weltanschauung is even more radically anthropomorphic than the biblical one. In I and Thou, it is not just God who is encountered as a "Thou," as a subject over against man, but also inanimate objects, artistic forms, and the animal world are so encountered. Here then, is another ground for asserting that Buber is "A Prophet in Philosophical Clothing," namely, the radically anthropomorphic character of his thought.

We have already noted the astonishing breadth of Buber's achievement, and observed that its quality is so great that specialists in many fields must take note of his work. And it is precisely because his achievement has been so great in so many directions that there is always the temptation to be swept into enthusiastic and uncritical praise—to credit him with achievements in that area in which he is least successful, the area of formal philosophy. For example, Maurice Friedman claims: "Martin Buber's 'I-Thou' philosophy cuts underneath all. . .distinctions between types of subject-object knowledge to establish the 'I-Thou' relation as an entirely other way of knowing, yet one from which the I-It, or subject-object, relation is derived."[1]

Friedman then goes on to show that Buber's theory of knowledge resolves the epistemological difficulties raised by almost all the significant thinkers of the Western tradition, among them Descartes, Kant, the Idealists, and the Logical Positivists.[2] These claims are lavish, and in the discussion of Buber's epistemology we shall see that many of the solutions to the subject-object problem

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[1] The Life of Dialogue, p. 163.

[2] Ibid.

which Friedman finds in his thought are indeed suggested by Buber's terminology, but that on closer examination the same difficulties which have beset other philosophical systems enter Buber's philosophy as well. For here, as is so often the case, a fresh way of treating traditional philosophical problems gives rise to a fresh basis for stating the difficulties inherent in the problems.

Turning to methodological considerations: this study will rely most heavily upon the works of Buber's mature period—that period which begins with the formulation of his dialogic philosophy in I and Thou. This procedure is adopted because it is the most significant period of Buber's work. All the valuable insights of the earlier writings are incorporated into his philosophy of "I and Thou," although they gain enormously in both force and clarity of expression, while many ideas and modes of expression that were less worthy were eliminated. With I and Thou Buber's thought attained maturity. No writer on Buber claims to have found a stage in his thought that goes beyond I and Thou.[1]

Buber's interpretation of Judaism has often been mentioned in this introduction in connection with his effort to recast the Jewish message in terms that would prove intelligible to the man of today. This study will not evaluate Buber's interpretation of Judaism, as this would involve a statement of a normative view of Judaism and the comparisons of Buber's work with that of other interpretors, a task which would in itself require a full-length study.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 77f., see also, pp. 48-53.

Here we can only note that Buber's view of the Jewish faith is a radically existential one and that it relies very heavily on the Old Testament (with emphasis on the prophetic writings) and on Hasidism. The following quotations present an accurate statement of his attitude towards these two aspects of Judaism. The first appears in an article entitled, "The Man of Today and the Jewish Bible."

> To exert an influence on contemporary man, religion itself would have to return to reality. And religion was always real only when it was free of fear, when it shouldered the load of concreteness instead of rejecting it as something belonging to another realm, when it made the spirit incarnate, and sanctified everyday life.
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> The so-called Old Testament constitutes the greatest document of such reality.[1]

The following evaluation of the significance of Hasidism appears in an article on "The Faith of Judaism."

> In hasidism I see merely a concentrated movement, the concentration of all those elements which are to be found in a less condensed form everywhere in 'rabbinic' Judaism.[2]

When one considers the many volumes that Buber has written about these two facets of the Jewish heritage, his almost total neglect of the Talmud and the great body of literature which has been written on it must be noted. The talmudic tradition was the only Jewish tradition until the emancipation of Jewry from the ghettos of Europe in relatively recent times. Furthermore, the problem of "observance," of conformity to the Law of Moses interpreted by this tradition, has been a central one for the Jewish community since the

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[1] Martin Buber, "The Man of Today and the Jewish Bible," trans. Olga Marx, Israel and the World, Essays in a Time of Crisis (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), p. 91.

[2] "The Faith of Judaism," trans. Greta Hort, ibid., p. 13.

development of Reform Judaism at the start of the nineteenth century, and Buber's writings on this problem are no more extensive than his writings on the Talmud, which is one reason he has exerted but little influence on Judaism to date.

Some rather singular aspects of his work deserve comment. Buber's thought is emphatically existential in character, yet his attitude toward the human situation is optimistic in tone. We shall see that the reason his religious Existentialism is more optimistic than that of many Protestant Existentialists is in part because his Existentialism is grounded in the outlook of the Hebrew Prophets rather than in Pauline thought, which Buber regards as a disease to which Christianity periodically succumbs. Paul Tillich writes that "Protestant theologians have been deeply impressed by these ideas [those appearing in I and Thou] of a religious Existentialism—which are perhaps less original and less powerful than those of Kierkegaard, but which are also less paradoxical and less forced."[1] It is because his writings are so replete with paradox (even if less so than Kierkegaard's), while at the same time maintaining a fundamentally optimistic outlook on the human situation, that this work is called—Paradox Without Anguish.

The title of Tillich's article, "Martin Buber and Christian Thought," suggests another singular facet of Buber's career. Although Buber is a profoundly Jewish thinker, the greatest impact of his thought has been exerted upon Christian theologians, especially upon the Protestant ones. In dis-

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[1]Tillich, "Martin Buber and Christian Thought," op. cit., p. 517.

cussing Buber's influence on Christian thinkers, Friedman lists some seventeen outstanding theologians who have been influenced by Buber.[1] If he were to attempt to write an article on "Martin Buber and Jewish Thought," he would hardly be able to find a handful of Jewish thinkers of any stature who have been similarly influenced. Of course, if the German Jewish community had not been destroyed it might have produced a significant number of disciples, but this does not alter the fact that Buber's influence on Jewish religious thinkers outside Germany has not even been remotely comparable to his extensive influence on non-German Christian theologians.

Ernst Simon has testified to Buber's distress over this anomoly: "How did it happen that Christian theologians understood him better than Jewish leaders or rabbis?" And Simon rightly insists that this problem was aggravated for Buber by the fact that he, unlike Franz Rosenzweig, had never considered conversion to Christianity.[2] In fact, Buber does not share Rosenzweig's conviction that Christianity and Judaism are equally valid examples of covenantal existence.[3] While Buber is sympathetic to the figure of Jesus in what he regards as the Nazarene's essentially Jewish being, he feels that Christianity has fundamentally distorted his significance. Simon quotes an address which Buber delivered in Jerusalem:

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[1]Friedman, The Life of Dialogue, p. 268.

[2]Ernst Simon, "Martin Buber: His Way between Thought and Deed" (on his 70th anniversary), Jewish Frontier, XV (February, 1948), 25.

[3]For Rosenzweig's own exposition of his position on the relations between Judaism and Christianity, see Nahum N. Glatzer (ed.), Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, Inc., 1953), pp. 341-348; see also, Will Herberg, "Judaism and Christianity: Their Unity and Difference," The Journal of Bible and Religion, XXI (April, 1953), 67-78; and Will Herberg, "Rosenzweig's 'Judaism of Personal Existence.'" Commentary, X (December, 1950), 547f.

> "I firmly believe that the Jewish community in the course of its renaissance will recognize Jesus; and not merely as a great figure of its religious history but also in the organic context of a Messianic development extending over millenia, whose final goal is the redemption of Israel and of the world. But I believe equally firmly that we will never recognize Jesus as the Messiah Come, for this would contradict the deepest meaning of our Messianic passion. . ."[1]

That such a profoundly Jewish thinker as Buber should have exerted far more influence on Protestant than upon Jewish thought may be explained by the difference between the contemporary theological situation of these two faiths. As Tillich says, "Liberal Protestant theology, since the rise of Deism, has tried to mediate between the world interpreted by modern science and the biblical idea of God."[2] The Deism referred to by Tillich was a movement which originated in the seventeenth century. The emancipation of the Jews from the ghetto and their entrance into the main stream of European culture, did not take place until the beginning of the nineteenth century. When it did take place, Judaism belatedly faced the same problems as Liberal Protestantism (in its Deist form) had faced so much earlier, and Reform Judaism had to grapple with this problem of the reconciliation of the universe as interpreted by modern science, and of the biblical idea of God. As Judaism was late (by force of historical circumstance) in developing the liberal religious outlook, so too it has been late in deserting some of the more naive formulations of that outlook. The reluctance of Reform Judaism, and in America of the Conservative branch as well, to break with the more extreme forms of religious liberalism (which have been under constant attack in Pro-

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[1] Simon, op. cit., p. 26. (my underlining).

[2] Tillich, "Martin Buber and Christian Thought," op. cit., p. 517.

testantism since the first World War) is also attributable to the association between liberalism in all its forms—political, cultural, and religious—with the tolerant outlook that led to the emancipation of European Jewry from the ghetto. Therefore, despite the liberal political views of so many exponents of Protestantism's new orthodoxy, of men like Reinhold Neibuhr and Paul Tillich, any form of orthodoxy, whether it be fundamentalist or sophisticated in character, is suspected by the Jewish community of being a breeding ground for the religious and political intolerance that have characterized the orthodoxies of the past.

Thus Buber, whose existential interpretation of Judaism has undoubtedly been influenced by the new orthodoxy, as he was in personal contact with many of its representatives,[1] and was fully immersed in the surge of the intellectual currents which produced it,[2] failed to gain a hearing among Jewish religious thinkers who were still secure in the first glow of the liberal reaction. It should be added that his thought elicited no response in orthodox Jewish circles, not even in the circles of the Hasidim, upon whose teachings he had labored so mightily in his effort to being them before the world, because Jewish orthodoxy had not yet entered the stream of Western culture and it was, therefore, unvexed by the problems this scientifically oriented culture presented to traditional religion. Two factors may render Buber's thought more influential in Jewish circles, particularly in America, in the future. The first is that the same factors which induced Protestant thinkers to become more critical of

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[1] Ibid., p. 515. Here Tillich tells the story of his early encounters with Buber; particularly of one in which Buber rejected his proposal to abandon the use of the much misused word God.

[2] Kohn, op. cit., pp. 213-221; see also, Simon Maringer, Martin Bubers Metaphysik der Dialogik im Zusammenhang neurer philosopischer und theologischer Strömungen—Darstellung und Kritik (Köln: Buchdruckerei Steiner, 1936).

liberalism may operate upon liberal Judaism as well. The other is that America is producing a form of orthodoxy that responds to modern culture, and Buber should prove an effective mediator in this situation.

Finally, it should be noted that this work will repeatedly use selections from Buber's Tales of the Hasidim to elucidate his thought. It may seem odd to use them so extensively since they are tales told by hasidic disciples who were not concerned with the systematic elaboration of the Jewish faith, or even of hasidic teachings. Yet their use serves to demonstrate a major contention of this study, namely, that the content of Buber's philosophy is derived from this kind of material. Furthermore, these stories are like humorous anecdotes in that they immediately convey the meaning of points that may be rather obscure in their theoretical formulations.

PART ONE

MEANING IN ENCOUNTER

CHAPTER I

THE DIALOGIC APPROACH TO EXISTENCE

Buber and Mysticism

Buber's dialogic philosophy receives its normative statement in I and Thou, and Paul Tillich has observed that this work constitutes a rediscovery of mysticism as an element within prophetic religion as well as an existential interpretation of prophetic religion.[1] Since, in his mature thought, Buber insists that unification mysticism is an illusion, we must examine I and Thou carefully to see in just what sense, if any, it might constitute a rediscovery of mysticism as an element within prophetic religion.

In the extended discussion of mysticism which occurs in the third section of I and Thou, Buber describes the manner in which he had formerly confused the unification of the soul with the identification of the soul and God.[2] Once he had achieved clarity on this matter, Buber came to regard identification as an illusion, for "in lived reality there is no unity of being."[3] When he refers to the doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism which, in his view, claims that the individual soul may be absorbed into

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[1] Tillich, "Martin Buber and Christian Thought," op. cit., p. 516.

[2] I and Thou, p. 86.

[3] I and Thou, p. 89.

the "One Thinking Essence" or into the "pure Subject," he radically rejects it and states that "all doctrine of absorption is based on the colossal illusion of the human spirit that is bent back on itself, that spirit exists in man."[1]

If, then, Buber vehemently rejects the mystical doctrines of identification, or absorption, how, we may well ask, can I and Thou represent a rediscovery of mysticism as an element within prophetic religion? The answer to this question is found in the realm of epistemology. Buber's dialogic philosophy involves a basic intuition of otherness, and intuition is the epistemological technique of mysticism. In William P. Montague's consideration of different theories of knowledge, he takes the position that mysticism is a theory that truth can be attained in a super-rational and super-sensuous faculty of intuition.[2] He regards intuition as a proper technique for making judgments of ultimate, non-instrumental value, as, for example, the judgment of faith on which romantic love is based. "In this region," he says, "intuition in the sense of immediate feeling would seem to be not merely the most appropriate faculty, but the only faculty for affording information."[3]

Buber, as we shall see, employs intuition in a wider area than the one that Montague regards as valid, yet he shies away from the doctrine of identification. When his thought reached maturity, the influence of mysticism persisted solely in the form of his intuitive epistemology, and in this sense only is Tillich's statement that I and Thou represents a rediscovery of mysticism as an element within prophetic religion correct.

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[1] Ibid., p. 93.

[2] William Pepperell Montague, The Ways of Knowing or the Methods of Philosophy (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1925), p. 54.

[3] Ibid., p. 226.

Although Buber rarely uses the term intuition, his one extended examination of the term clearly sets it within the relational framework of his dialogic philosophy:

> . . .intuition through insight, binds us up, as persons, to a world which stands over against us, binds us up with it, without being able to unite us with it. For intuition, though it. . .grants us a glimpse into hidden depths, cannot be absolute since like all perceptions it is determined by our generally human and our individual qualities.[1]

In this emphasis on reality as intuitively grasped, Buber joins company with the Existentialists, and a brief examination of some major elements of this movement follows.

The Revolt of the Concrete

In an article on "Existential Philosophy," Paul Tillich presents the major thrust of this movement as a protest against ". . .the identification of Reality or Being with Reality-as-known, with the object of Reason or thought."[2] In his view, the issue between existential thinkers and other philosophical schools is rooted in the traditional distinction between essence and existence. Scholastic philosophy distinguished the essence of a thing which signifies What it is from its existence which signifies That it is, and according to Tillich, within the context of this formulation the Existentialists insist that:

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[1]Martin Buber, "Zu Bergsons Begriff der Intuition," Hinweise, pp. 227f. (my translation); see also Friedman, The Life of Dialogue, pp. 174f.

[2]Paul Tillich, "Existential Philosophy," Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. V, No. 1 (January, 1944), p. 44.

> . . .Reality or Being in its concreteness and fullness is not the object of cognitive experience, but it is rather "existence," is Reality as immediately experienced, with the accent on the inner and personal character of man's immediate experience.[1]

For this reason, the "Existential thinker" does not test the adequacy of his thought in terms of rational consistency alone. He considers himself not as a thinking instrument but as a man; and he refuses to discount his immediate personal and inner experience. He refuses to identify reality with "objective being." Professor Tillich adds:

> But it would be equally misleading to say that it [existential thought] identifies Reality with "subjective being," with "consciousness" or feeling. Such a view would still leave the meaning of "subjective" determined by its contrast with that of "objective"; and this is just the contrary of what the Existential Philosophy is aiming at. Like many other appeals to immediate experience, it is trying to find a level on which the contrast between "subject" and "object" has not arisen.[2]

Beyond question, Buber participates in the existential reaction which may be called The Revolt of the Concrete. He tells us that he joined

> . . .the struggle of recent decades against the idealistic concepts of the sovereign, world-embracing, world-sustaining, world-creating I. The struggle was conducted (among other ways) by reference to the neglected creaturely bonds of the concrete human person. It was shown how fundamentally important it is to know in every movement of thought this as well—that the one who thinks is bound . . .to a spatial realm, to a historical hour, to the genus man, to a people, to a family, to a society, to a vocational group, to a compansionship in convictions.[3]

What then is the fundamental character of immediate personal experience which in Buber's view discloses the meaning of existence?

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., pp. 55f.

[3] "The Question to the Single One," Between Man and Man, p. 80.

Speech as the Clue

For Buber the approach to existence is the immediate personal experience of otherness, of something bodied over against a person which confronts him in the full independence of its being, which confronts him, therefore, in such a way that what transpires takes place not within the person but "between" the person and that which is over against him. The clue to the understanding of this approach to existence is found in speech. For this reason Buber terms his thought dialogic philosophy.

In a recent elaboration of this dialogic philosophy, "Distance and Relation,"[1] Buber develops his ideas of human uniqueness and the role played by speech in defining that uniqueness. He begins by contrasting man with the animal kingdom. In this view an animal cannot know a world because its environment is totally involved with its own immediate needs and functions. The animal cannot detach itself from this involvement and visualize the elements of that environment, much less its totality, as existing for themselves, independently of its own needs and perceptions. Therefore, it can only know an area of immediate environment, not a world. Man, on the other hand, can perform the movement of "the primal setting at a distance," he can detach himself from his environment and imagine the world as a totality of which he is but a part.

Buber then summarizes this distinction between an animal's realm of perceptions and a man's world by saying:

> It is only the realm which is removed, lifted out from sheer presence, withdrawn from the operation of needs and wants, set at a distance and thereby given over to itself, which is more and other than a realm. Only when a structure of being is independently over against a living being. . . an independent opposite, does a world exist.[2]

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[1] Martin Buber, "Distance and Relation," trans. Ronald Gregor Smith, The Hibbert Journal, XLIX (1951), pp. 105-113.

[2] Ibid., pp. 106f.

This setting at a distance of a world, a world withdrawn from the operation of needs and wants, provides a link with another way in which speech is to be regarded as the clue to an understanding of Buber's approach to existence. For setting at a distance enables man to form tools. To be sure, Buber knows that an animal may use instruments of utility, for example, a monkey may use a stick to help him reach a desired fruit, but he claims that man can detach the tool from its relation to his immediate needs, only man can store it for future use. Buber then extends this concept of the tool to include speech, which in Buber's view originated with the personal name: ". . .the name let the companion and helper at a distance know that his presence, his and none other, was needed in a given situation."[1] Along with names went the holophrase, the single word which expresses an idea, or even a combination of ideas. Yet, says Buber, ". . .man sets also his calls at a distance and gives them independence, he stores them, like a tool he has prepared, as objects which are ready for use, he makes them into words which exist by themselves."[2] Thus language shows that a man in addressing another by means of words must recognize the independent otherness, both of the other whom he calls and of the words which exist between them. And these words must also be independent of the subjectivity of each of them or else they will have no value as tools, for the person will not be able to make himself understood to the other.

Yet language points to another principle besides that of detachment and distancing. Man also enters into relation with that which stands over against him: "Man, as man, sets man at a distance and makes him independent, he lets the life of men like himself go on round about him, and so he, and he

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[1] Ibid., p. 111.

[2] Ibid.

alone, is able to enter into relation, in his own individual status, with those like himself."[1] The setting at a distance is the presupposition of entering into relation. The movement, is necessarily twofold; distance and relation presuppose each other—the one makes the other possible: ". . .an animal does not know the state of relation because one cannot stand in a relation to something that is not perceived and contrasted as existing for itself."[2]

What then takes place when man steps into relation with other men? The answer is given in Buber's comparison between the insect state, which allows no possible variation of function, and human society with its ". . . dynamic, adaptable, pluralistic form of association, which has been made possible by the factor of individual completion of function and the corresponding factor of mutual recognition of function."[3] Therefore, in addition to illustrating the way in which men set one another at a distance and recognize each other's independence, as being addressable by means of words, language also reveals ". . .the wish of every man to be confirmed as what he is, even as what he can become, by men; and the innate capacity in man to confirm his fellowmen in this way."[4]

Thus we come upon a distinction between two kinds of speech: one is rooted in detachment and its primary purpose is utility. It comes about when man, having set the other at a distance, does not use the distance as the condition whereby he is enabled to enter into relation, but allows the distance to "thicken" and "solidify" so that he remains detached and uninvolved with the being of the other.[5] He is, in that case, not concerned with the being of the

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[1] Ibid., p. 110. [2] Ibid., p. 107. [3] Ibid., p. 110. [4] Ibid.

[5] Friedman, The Life of Dialogue, pp. 82f.

other for its own sake, but is concerned only with the utility of the other in terms of his own purposes. The other form of speech, "genuine conversation," says Buber, along with "every fulfilment of relation between men means acceptance of otherness."[1]

Buber's description of these two forms of speech leads to his version of "the principle of finitude" which Tillich regards as a major theme of existential philosophy. It emerges from the dissolution of the Hegelian view of the world process which explained it in terms of the dialectical identity of the finite with the infinite. He claims that Existentialism re-establishes the consciousness of the divorce of the finite from the infinite.[2] For many Existentialists, this consciousness is a tragic one. Reinhold Niebuhr has described it as a consciousness which involves a permenent sense of anxiety and he has expressed it in terms of the vivid image of the sailor climbing the mast, ". . .with the abyss of the waves beneath him and the 'crow's nest' above him. He is anxious about both the end towards which he strives and the abyss of nothingness into which he may fall."[3]

Yet, when Buber deals with this situation of finitude he parts company with other Existentialists, not in content, for he too regards it as one of finite freedom in which each man is dependent upon others for confirmation of his being, but he differs from them in tone. In his description of man's finitude, he says: "Human life and humanity come into being in genuine meetings. There man learns not merely that he is limited by man, cast upon his own finitude, partialness, need of completion, but his own relation to truth [the witness of the infinite in this context] is heightened by the other's

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[1]"Distance and Relation," op. cit., p. 111.

[2]Tillich, "Existential Philosophy," op. cit., p. 59.

[3]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, A Christian Interpretation, Vol. I, Human Nature (One vol. ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 185.

different relation to the same truth. . ."[1] Because of this heightening of the relation of each individual to truth in genuine meetings with other men, Buber sees no grounds for despair in this separation of man from the infinite. Certainly men have profound needs because they are incomplete and finite, but what they need, Buber insists, is granted them. Men need, he says,

> . . .to confirm one another in their individual being by means of genuine meetings. But beyond this they need, and it is granted to them, to see the truth, which the soul gains by its struggle, light up to the others, the brothers, in a different way, and even so be confirmed.[2]

Here we have a powerful example of Buber's optimistic Existentialism. Starting with an intuition of immediate personal experience that comes to men in encounter with each other in speech, an intuition similar in type to those which constitute the starting points of other existential thinkers, he finds hope and confirmation where they find tragedy, anxiety, and even despair. It is not that he is in any way less existential than the others, as we have just noted, he too sees man as finite and free. It is rather that his response to this situation is an optimistic one based on the companionship which other finite men afford him. This points to one ground for characterizing his thought as Paradox Without Anguish.

Buber knows that his view of the other is at this point in conflict with some of the fundamental tenets of modern thought. Having criticized Sartre for making a kind of personal isolation, hitherto regarded as a need of the man shut up within himself, into a fundamental principle of living, thus erecting an unbridgeable wall between selves who can know no directness in

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[1] Buber, "Distance and Relation," op. cit., p. 112.

[2] Ibid.; see also Martin Buber, "Elemente des Zwischenmenschlichen," Die Schriften über das dialogische Prinzip (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1954), p. 279.

relation to each other,[1] he says that:

> Perceiving the fellow creature as a completeness, unity, and uniqueness, even if one that has for the most part only incompletely developed, contradicts almost all that which man is accustomed to understand as specifically modern. In this time, an analytical, reductive, and derivative type of viewing prevails between man and man.[2]

Buber makes it quite clear that he regards this "type of viewing" as the factor which gives man's situation of finite freedom such a pessimistic—an anxiety and despair-ridden—quality.

Communication with All Beings

Speech is truly the clue to Buber's intuition of existence, but his use of the term is subject to misunderstandings. For he speaks in almost paradoxical terms about speech when he says that it can be silent: "Just as the most eager speaking at one another does not make a conversation. . .so for a conversation no sound is necessary, not even a gesture. Speech can renounce all the media of sense, and it is still speech."[3] Buber illustrates silent communication by means of the deep exchange of a glance between two men in an air raid, or with a better example, of communication which involves no sensible gesture at all, that of two men listening to the music of Mozart in the darkened opera house, both listening with a high degree of purity and intensity.[4]

"The basic movement in the life of dialogue" says Buber, "is the

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[1] Ibid., p. 268. [2] Ibid., pp. 270f. (my translation).

[3] "Dialogue," Between Man and Man, p. 3.

[4] "What is Man?", ibid., p. 204.

turning towards the other."[1] And for this, as we have just noted, no sound, no sensible gesture, is necessary. Buber clarifies the meaning of this turning toward the other by describing its opposite—reflection. "I term it reflexion when a man withdraws from accepting with his essential being another person in his particularity. . .and lets the other exist only as his own experience, only as a 'part of myself.'"[2] Buber is concerned to make this distinction clear because it is fundamental to his ontological perspectives. For, if you were to insist that the over-againstness of the other in relation might be an illusion, Buber would emphatically disagree. In his view, a man who bends back upon himself in the movement of reflection instead of turning towards the other, is involved in self-contradiction.[3] So Buber in describing Napoleon (and how many other leaders of our time?) says: "He sees the beings around him, indeed, as machines, capable of various achievements, which must be taken into account and utilized for the Cause."[4]

Utility is the heart of false relation, of a detachment that is not a basis for entering into relation with another but is rather a fundamental movement into a false relation to the self; a relation in which a person attempts to absorb the other into the self instead of turning towards the other and meeting him as one who exists independently over against the self.

The two fundamental movements of man, which Buber calls distancing and relating, are rooted in the experience of speech. The truest form of communication, "genuine conversation," is modelled upon the relation between man and wife.

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[1] "Dialogue," ibid., p. 22. [2] Ibid., pp. 23f.

[3] I and Thou, pp. 69f.

[4] Ibid., p. 68.

> Marriage is the exemplary bond. . . .This person is other, essentially other than myself, and this otherness of his is what I mean, because I mean him; I confirm it; I wish his otherness to exist, because I wish his particular being to exist. That is the basic principle of marriage. . .[1]

This intimate human relation provides the model for every movement of relation and for this reason Buber's view of the movement of relation is frequently misunderstood; for readers think that he regards it as appropriate only to man's dealings with other persons. The movement of distancing is then taken as being proper to man's relation to things. However, despite the fact that love between man and wife constitutes the paradigm for the movement of entering into relation, Buber insists that this movement may be directed towards all beings. In a passage in which he describes this movement as a dialogic relating or "becoming aware," he says:

> It by no means needs to be a man of whom I become aware. It can be an animal, a plant, a stone. No kind of appearance or event is fundamentally excluded from the series of the things through which from time to time something is said to me. Nothing can refuse to be the vessel for the Word. The limits of the possibility of dialogue are the limits of awareness.[2]

To see what it is that happens when we find meaning between ourselves and things we shall turn to a study of the distinctive emphases of I and Thou.

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[1] "The Question to the Single One," Between Man and Man, p. 61.

[2] "Dialogue," ibid., p. 10.

CHAPTER II

THE PHILOSOPHY OF "I AND THOU"

Defining the Realms

I and Thou begins with the declaration that to man the world is twofold in accordance with his twofold attitude, and this twofold attitude is expressed by the two primary word pairs which he speaks.[1] The two attitudes define two realms which cut across all other distinctions between beings—the realm defined by the primary word pair "I-It" (or the "It" realm), and the one defined by the primary word pair "I-Thou" (or the "Thou" realm). In terms of our previous analysis, the attitude of detachment and utility delineates the "It" realm and the attitude of turning towards and stepping into relation determines the "Thou" realm.

Of the two primary word pairs Buber says, "Primary words do not signify things, but they intimate relations."[2] This way of putting it may lead to confusion, because in terms of Buber's analysis in "Distance and Relation," it is only the "I-Thou" realm which could properly be called one of relation. We must therefore remember that the movement of distancing is the presupposition of both primary words, of the "I-Thou" as well as the "I-It." However, when the distance "thickens" and "solidifies" the person

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[1] Buber, I and Thou, p. 3.

[2] Ibid.

fails to step into relation, fails to enter the "Thou" realm; he persists in an attitude of detachment and utility towards the other, and this attitude constitutes the "I-It" relation.

Another of Buber's statements about the role of primary words is capable of causing some confusion as to his fundamental meaning, for he says that "primary words do not describe something that might exist independently of them, but being spoken they bring about existence."[1] Here Buber is making a point fundamental to all Existentialists, namely, that the world as man encounters it in existence is not something that he can consider apart from his distinctively human mode of encountering it, which, for Buber, means he cannot consider it apart from this twofold attitude that defines man as such. Just as there is no viewing of the "world-in-itself" in the Kantian sense, so, for Buber, there is no speaking of the "I-in-itself." Any "I" which is spoken is either the "I" of the "I-It" or the "I" of the "I-Thou" attitude. In "Distance and Relation," Buber explicitly rejects any idealistic interpretation of his statement that "primary words being spoken bring about existence," when he says:

> What has been indicated here must not be misunderstood as meaning that I "establish" the world, or the like. Man's act of setting at a distance is, no more than his act of relation which is bound up with it, to be understood as primary. [Here the word primary, as will be seen from the following, is used ontologically.] Rather is this the peculiarity of human life, that here alone a being has arisen from the whole, endowed and entitled to detach the whole as a world from himself and to make it an opposite to himself. . . .This endowment and this entitlement of man produce, out of the whole, the being of the world, and this being can only mean that it is there for man as something that is for itself, with which he is able to enter into relation.[2]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] "Distance and Relation," op. cit., p. 108.

The Realm of "It"

The "It" realm is that world disclosed to man when he distances himself and detaches himself from things. It is a reliable realm whose main functions are experiencing and using.[1] The problematics involved in one form of "It" perception, sense perception, which have so plagued modern epistemologists, constitute no problem to Buber. He regards the world of sense perception as a reliable world, "and this in spite of all subjective paradoxes in observation connected with it for us."[2]

There are two modes of perceiving that characterize the "It" realm. The first is that of an observer, and is the view of scientific detachment. Such an observer studies a man as an object and is intent on fixing the man in his mind, on noting his prominent traits.[3]

The second mode of perceiving is that of the onlooker, for example, an artist, but not as an artist engaged in the fundamental act of creativity with a form that he would realize over against him, but rather one who is studying the other as an object. Even so, it would seem that the mode of perception of such an onlooker would involve a radical contrast with that of a scientific observer. For the onlooker is not intent; only his initial selection of the object of perception involves conscious purpose. After that, he lets his unconscious powers come into play. His view is synthetic and is not involved in the analysis of traits. But in Buber's view, the onlooker and the observer are joined in that both have an attitude of utilitarian detachment toward their object.

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[1] Buber, I and Thou, p. 38.

[2] Ibid., p. 92.

[3] Buber, "Dialogue," Between Man and Man, pp. 8f.

> . . .this man is for them an object separated from themselves and their personal life, who can in fact for this sole reason be "properly" perceived. Consequently what they experience in this way, whether it is, as with the observer, a sum of traits, or, as with the onlooker, an existence, neither demands action from them nor inflicts destiny on them. But rather the whole is given over to the aloof fields of aesthesis.[1]

The other function of the realm of "It" is that of experience: "Man travels over the surface of things and experiences them. He extracts knowledge about their constitution from them: he wins an experience from them. He experiences what belongs to the things."[2] This does not mean experience in general, involving all that happens to a person, including an "I-Thou" encounter, but rather Buber describes the "It" realm experience in terms that almost identify it with solipsism: "The man who experiences has no part in the world for it is 'in him' and not between him and the world that the experience arises."[3] Here we see the sense in which Buber can claim that he participated in "that struggle of recent decades against the idealistic concepts of the sovereign, world-embracing, world-sustaining, world-creating I."[4]

In the realm of "It," then, a man perceives an ordered and detached world which is reliable in that it is perceived as "things consisting of qualities, events of moments; things entered into the graph of place, events in that of time. . ."[5] He who perceives the realm of "It" can compare and measure that which he finds within it; it is to some extent reliable, having density and duration, and its organization can be surveyed and verified; it is objective and remains such as long as the individual wishes.[6]

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[1] Ibid., p. 9. [2] Buber, I and Thou, p. 5. [3] Ibid.

[4] "The Question to the Single One," Between Man and Man, p. 80.

[5] Buber, I and Thou, p. 31.

[6] Ibid., pp. 31f.

"Only concerning it," says Buber, "may you make yourself 'understood' with others; it is ready, though attached to everyone in a different way, to be an object common to you all."[1] It is, we might say, the world as known through science and technology. Yet, though the reliable world of scientific procedures, of analysis, verification, and utility serves as the paradigm of the "I-It" relation, the realm of "It" is not to be identified with the world of science. It is also the world known in art, philosophy, and religion. The twofold attitude of man cuts across all other distinctions. Any object toward which we can take the attitude of detachment is also one toward which we may take the attitude of relation. The realm of "It" is simply the realm in which experience is characterized by the attitude of detachment so that it can easily be shared and verified.

In Buber's view, "the primary word I-It is not of evil—as matter is not of evil. It is of evil—as matter is, which presumes to have the quality of present being,"[2] that is, which presumes to have the quality of the "I-Thou" realm. In fact, Buber knows that without the "It" realm man cannot live.[3] But he adds:

> It is not as though scientific and esthetic understanding were not necessary; but they are necessary to man that he may do his work with precision and plunge it in the truth of relation, which is above the understanding and gathers it up in itself.[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 32. [2] Ibid., p. 46.

[3] Ibid., p. 34. [4] Ibid., p. 42.

The Realm of "Thou"

> When we ask wherein the uniqueness of the "I-Thou" relation is manifested, we enter the most delicate field of our investigation. The author [Buber] obviously appeals to us to find an echo of his words in our own life.[1]

This statement which Jacob B. Agus makes at the outset of his interpretation of the "I-Thou" encounter is a very proper beginning for an exposition of it. Unfortunately, in his own exposition of the "I-Thou" encounter he fails to follow the implications of this insight, rather, he presents a detailed listing of the qualities which enter into Buber's description of the "I-Thou" relation, without making any attempt to relate them to the substance of lived experience. By way of contrast, in the following exposition, I shall present an example of an "I-Thou" encounter deeply related to my own life and use it as a springboard for developing Buber's description of the qualities that are intrinsic to the encounter.

A concert is an exciting event, the more so when a favorite composer is being performed by exciting artists. Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto is a composition I deeply love. To hear a performance of it by pianist Clifford Curzon, accompanied by George Szell and the New York Philharmonic should have represented the realization of an ideal. I know of no other performers who so consistently maintain the tension of the dialogue between soloist and orchestra in performing the great concerti. Yet, the performance did not move me.

> The Thou meets me through grace—it is not found by seeking.[2]

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[1] Agus, op. cit., p. 239.

[2] Buber, I and Thou, p. 11.

Yet, my seeking is not unrelated to my meeting with a "Thou," in this case with the beauty and profundity of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto. For, if I did not put myself in the way of the music, if I did not go to a place where it was being played, it would surely be impossible to meet it.

> The Thou meets me. But I step into direct relation with it. Hence the relation means being chosen and choosing, suffering and action in one. . .[1]

Suffering and action—this is the clue: both are relevant.

On another occasion, I went to a concert to hear Bruno Walter play Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. I am not overly fond of Walter's Beethoven which I regard as romanticized in conception and loose in execution. I went to this concert only after insistent urging by friends, yet on this occasion grace was genuinely present. At the sound of the first few bars I sensed something compelling in the music and let myself respond. The swelling of the music as it moved from the almost pastoral lyricism of the first movement to the somber dread and the sobbing passion of the second was enhanced by the sight of Walter leading the choirs in and out of the themes. No distractions were present. During that Curzon-Szell performance of the Fourth Piano Concerto again and again I had found myself comparing it with other performances. Again and again I had tried to account for its dullness. Yet on the occasion of this performance by Walter all was present, exclusively present. I could think of no other performances because this one was utterly absorbing.

> Every real relation with a being or life in the world is exclusive. Its Thou is freed, steps forth, is single and confronts you.[2]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 78.

There was no ticking away of the seconds during such an encounter; time in the sense of objective chronology was absent just as the place of the encounter could no longer be fixed in the graph of space. I was certainly not aware of being in Carnegie Hall at Seventh Avenue and Fifty-seventh Street in New York City.

> The world of It is set in the context of space and time.
> The world of Thou is not set in the context of either of these.[1]

I was living to the time of Beethoven's Seventh, not to the time called Eastern Standard, which was being recorded by my wrist watch. It was the time not only of this symphony, but precisely the time of this performance by Bruno Walter of Beethoven's Seventh and of no other performance.

> . . .man meets what exists and becomes as what is over against him, always simply a single being and each thing simply as being.[2]

My entire being was involved in this relation. Here, there was no split between the intellectual and the emotional as there so often is in saccharine performances where the intellect warns one that the emotions are being taken in.

The primary word I-Thou can only be spoken with the whole being.[3] When Buber says that the whole being is involved he means that the knowledge gained by the person in the realm of "It" is taken up into the "I-Thou" encounter. We may recall his statement that aesthetic and scientific understanding are necessary to man that he may gather up their fruits and plunge them into the truth of relation.[4] I do not have to purge myself of the technical knowledge of music that I may have acquired, nor need I obliterate the memory of previous performances of the symphony.

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[1] Ibid., p. 33. [2] Ibid., p. 32. [3] Ibid., p. 3. [4] Ibid., p. 42.

> There is nothing from which I would have to turn my eyes away in order to see, and no knowledge that I would have to forget. Rather is everything, picture and movement, species and type, law and number, indivisibly united in this event.[1]

Because my relation to the music could not be ordered in the graph of objective time and space, because "the Thou knows no system of co-ordination,"[2] the "Thou" encounter cannot be linked to a chain of causes. In Buber's view, no psychoanalyst, no matter how much he might have studied my psychic patterns, could possibly account for the wonder of the moment in which this symphony addressed me.

> So long as the heaven of Thou is spread out over me the winds of causality cower at my heels, and the whirlpool of fate stays its course.[3]

If at any moment during the performance I had suddenly become conscious of my relation to the music, overconscious of myself as listening, then I would, by that very act have disrupted the "Thou" relation and transformed the encounter. I would have again found myself in the world of "It" readying comments on the "sublimity" of the performance.

> The man who has become conscious of I, that is, the man who says I-It stands before things, but not over against them in the flow of mutual action.[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 7. [2] Ibid., p. 31.

[3] Ibid., p. 9. [4] Ibid., p. 29.

The Spheres of Relation

"Genuine conversation," true disclosure of an "I" to a "Thou," takes place in its clearest form in our life with men. Since speech is the clue to Buber's basic intuition of existence, it is obvious that man with man is the place where the "I-Thou" relation is most clearly fulfilled.

> Here language is consummated as a sequence in speech and counter-speech. . . .Only here does the primary word go backwards and forwards in the same form, the word of address and the word of response live in the one language, I and Thou take their stand not merely in relation, but also in the solid give-and-take of talk. . . .Here what confronts us has blossomed into the full reality of the Thou.[1]

Yet this, our life with men, the life within which the "Thou" relation is clearest, is but the second of the three spheres out of which the world of relation is built. The others are:

> First, our life with nature, in which the relation clings to the threshold of speech.
> . . . . . .
> Third, our life with intelligible forms, where the relation being without speech, yet begets it.[2]

To understand the sense in which my relation to the Beethoven symphony, an illustration drawn from the third realm, could have been mutual we must recollect Buber's formulation of the two principle movements in "Distance and Relation." In the first movement, that of distancing, the independent otherness of the opposite, in this case of the music, is established. By this Buber means that I know that the music and the beauty it discloses are not figments of my imagination but that they really exist outside of me. Yet in the second movement, that of entering into relation, the independent otherness of that which is over against me is not only established, it is confirmed. That is why in this genuine encounter with Beethoven's Seventh Symphony I was not detaching myself from Walter's performance and

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[1] Ibid., pp. 102f. [2] Ibid., p. 101.

comparing it to that of other conductors; I was affirming it in its individual being. In the same way, and here Buber feels that we may speak of mutuality, it was confirming me, for in the presentness of that encounter in which I was bound up with the music, meaning was disclosed to me, and a vital aspect of my being, the faculty of apprehending beauty, was confirmed.

You say that this hardly constitutes full mutuality since I am a conscious self, while the music is not. (For the purpose of clarity it might be best if we thought of an encounter with a great painting or statue, since in the case of music the interpreters at least are conscious selves.) The answer is obvious. This is why Buber makes life with man the paradigm.

> This is the main portal, into whose opening the two side-gates [the other two spheres] lead, and in which they are included.[1]

Having considered an illustration drawn from the realm of our life with intelligible forms, we now turn to Buber's much criticized illustration from the sphere of nature, his encounter with a tree. "It can however. . . come about, if I have both will and grace, that in considering the tree I become bound up in relation to it. The tree is now no longer It."[2] What happens, we may ask, when this "Thou" encounter with a tree occurs? To answer this question, we must again recognize Buber's part in the "Revolt of the Concrete" against the "idealistic concepts of the sovereign, world-embracing, world-sustaining, world-creating I." For in the "Thou" encounter with the tree comes the assurance that:

> The tree is no impression, no play of my imagination, no value depending upon my mood; but it is bodied over against me and has to do with me, as I with it—only in a different way.
> Let no attempt be made to sap the strength from the meaning of relation: relation is mutual.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 103. [2] Ibid., p. 7. [3] Ibid., p. 8.

Here Buber registers his sharp impatience with the endless refinements of epistemological controversy. He would vault over the question of subjectivity and objectivity and the reliability of our sense perceptions and affirm the basic intuition of "over-againstness" that comes to man in encounters with other beings, and of the realm of meaning that is established "between" them.

Yet the concept of mutuality must be regarded as even more tenuous in this sphere than in the third sphere, that of intelligible forms. For in the case of an encounter with intelligible forms, say with art, we know that conscious purpose was involved in its creation.

Buber anticipates our difficulty in conceiving of a "Thou" encounter with a tree, and he expresses our difficulty in the form of a question.

> The tree will have a consciousness, then, similar to our own? Of that I have no experience. But do you wish, through seeming to succeed in it with yourself, once again to disintegrate that which cannot be disintegrated? I encounter no soul or dryad of the tree, but the tree itself.[1]

Anyone with a strong feeling for nature can sense the affirming of the individual being of the tree that lies behind these words. Buber responds fully to the "over-againstness" of the tree, and in doing so he tries to avoid any trace of panpsychism. Yet the difficulty persists, and in his most recent work, Der Mensch und sein Gebild, he presents his most extensive attempt to probe the basis upon which the realm of nature can be regarded as a sphere of dialogic relatedness.[2]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Martin Buber, Der Mensch und sein Gebild (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1955), see especially pp. 27-35.

He introduces the subject with the observation that all human relatedness has a sensory foundation of countless combinations of movements towards something and perceptions of something, and in this context, he seems to acknowledge a distinction between two types of objects to which man relates. The first class of sensible objects consists of those beings who can genuinely communicate with man as partners—they can become "Thou" to him. Buber claims that the being of this class of objects can be comprehended as fully independent of himself as perceiver without curtailing their sensible properties. When he turns to a characterization of the other class of objects to which man can relate in perception, Buber goes quite far in the direction of acknowledging a difference in beings according to their intrinsic properties, since he says that they are beings to which he can ascribe no "I." Therefore, to conceive of the existence of one of these beings as existing independently of himself, apart from his perception of it, he finds that he must liberate it from the sensory world by divesting it of absolutely all of its sensible qualities. The "it-in-itself" which remains he designates with a small "x," distinguishing it from Kant's "thing-in-itself" by claiming that whereas, of the "thing-in-itself" Kant could assert only that "it is," and nothing more, we today, in speaking of the "x" must add "and it meets us."[1]

Up to this point in his argument Buber appears to have totally compromised a part of the fundamental perspective of I and Thou. It would seem that the world is not twofold to man in accordance with the twofold attitude he expresses in the primary words "I-Thou" and "I-It," but rather, some beings cannot be related to as "Thous" since they cannot be regarded as possessing an "I." However, in saying that the "x" meets him, Buber, in

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[1] Ibid., p. 30.

effect, reintroduces a dialogic category, and he proceeds from this point to an analysis of the relation of perception in which he tries to establish an element of mutuality. This would then serve to justify his talk of an "I-Thou" encounter between man and the sphere of nature.

He speaks of a linden tree with which he used to come into continual contact and poses a philosophical question, namely, the question as to the nature of its being both before and after his perception of it. He rejects the position of that school of philosophy which, he claims, would regard this question as a meaningless one, and then considers the analytic information of the sciences of botany and chemistry as a basis for answering this question. However, he rejects them as an account of the being of the tree, claiming that chlorophyll and mathematical abstractions do not yield the experienced reality of the tree.[1] He then introduces the fundamental perspectives of his "Distance and Relation" in an attempt to achieve a more satisfactory view of the perceptual relation. He claims that nature itself, the unperceived "x-nature," like the linden tree, strives toward the completion that comes with being perceived. Therefore, it once awaited the emergence of a living creature who could go beyond the environment-immersed level of the animal by performing the primal movement of setting it at a distance so that perceptual relation with it could follow. Out of this act of perception there enters into the world greenness, softness, warmth, indeed qualitativeness itself. Therefore, Buber claims that perceiving, despite all spirituality involved in man's being a subject, is a natural act in which both the "I" and the "x" take part. The sensible world itself wells up out of this intercourse of being with being.[2]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 30f.; for a fuller discussion of the split perception of modern man torn between sensory observation and scientific conceptualization, see ibid., pp. 20-26.

[2] Ibid., pp. 30-33.

Buber goes even further than this in his effort to show that the mutuality of the "Thou" encounter is possible even with beings to which he can ascribe no "I." First he acknowledges the fact that we cannot know what connections in the being of "x" correspond to the configurations of this our world.[1] However, he goes on to say that in the lived depths of our perceiving we experience the fact that from each unimaginable connection in the "x" world a multiplicity of stimuli shoots up to us in a way that suggests that it is almost as if the "x" fell apart into this multiplicity in order to reach us. Our senses work together in profound collaboration to bring forth the whole tree out of this multiplicity. Then the entire linden tree stands before us in such a way that rustling and fragrance are not qualities which we attach to it, but rather, we know that the tree itself rustles and emits fragrance, and that it is the tree itself which we feel when our hand touches its bark.[2]

In this analysis, Buber, having initially proceeded quite far in the direction of severing the sphere of nature from the dialogic realm, finally compensates by going still further in the opposite direction than he has ever gone before. He all but says that nature and the specific concrete linden tree consciously will to be completed by man through his act of perception. Thus, in this, his fullest attempt to resolve the problematic character of this sphere of dialogic relation, Buber has only intensified it.

Before ending this discussion of the spheres of relation, it should be noted that thought too lies within them. Buber is aware that ". . .there

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[1] Ibid., p. 33. This is an admission that recalls Buber's statement that he has no experience of a tree which would indicate that it has a consciousness similar to his own, see I and Thou, p. 8.

[2] Buber, Der Mensch und sein Gebild, pp. 33-35.

seems to cling to thought something of the life of monologue to which communication takes a second, secondary place,"[1] but he insists that this is wrong. He claims that the first trying and testing of thought is obviously involved in a turning towards the other since this process involves the mutual recognition of the independence of the other, and the confirmation of him, the other, in his individuality vis à vis the truth that lies "between" them.[2] Here there is genuine mutuality in the realm of thought even as we find mutuality full blown in the relation of love.

Yet Buber makes a further assertion that even in the original stage of thought, its very germinal roots, there is a genuine "Thou" involved. This assertion is far more problematic than his claim that the testing of thought involves a "Thou" relation. For the origin of thought in contrast to the testing of ideas does not involve discussion. But Buber tries to demonstrate this dialogic character of the origin of thought by turning from the process of thought to the "Existential thinker" who is concerned with ". . .the binding business of life on the hard earth,"[3] so that the very purpose of thought, even in the innermost reaches of the individual mind, is seen to involve an external "Thou."

Buber quotes Feuerbach to the effect that "true dialectic is not a monologue of the solitary thinker with himself, it is a dialogue between I and Thou," and he adds:

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[1]"Dialogue," Between Man and Man, pp. 25f.

[2]"Distance and Relation," op. cit., pp. 111f.

[3]"Dialogue," Between Man and Man, p. 27.

> But this saying points beyond that "reflecting" to the fact that even in the original stage of the proper act of thought the inner action might take place in relation to a genuine and not merely an "inward" (Novalis) Thou. . . .So, too, it is not a matter of a game of draughts in the tower of a castle in the air, but of the binding business of life on the hard earth, in which one is inexorably aware of the otherness of the other. . .one takes up its nature into one's own thinking, thinks in relation to it, addresses it in thought.[1]

The "Thou" Encounter as Transitory and as Truth

> But this is the exalted melancholy of our fate, that every Thou in our world must become an It.[2]

The "Thou" encounter with Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, as heard in the Bruno Walter performance, becomes the occasion for its use as an instrument of exposition in a doctoral dissertation. Contemplation of an object in nature as a being existing over against one in its own right soon gives way to analysis, description, and utilization of it as an object lying at hand. "It is not the relation that necessarily grows feeble, but the actuality of its immediacy. Love itself cannot persist in the immediacy of relation; love endures but in the interchange of actual and potential being."[3]

Buber insists that the immediacy of relation is not a subjective feeling that man entertains briefly only to have it vanish without leaving a trace. He speaks of the "metaphysical and metapsychical factor of love to which feelings of love are mere accompaniments,"[4] and is concerned that we recognize the interchange between the "Thou" and the "It" attitudes as one between actual and potential being. Therefore, the "Thou" moments certainly do leave an impact

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[1] Ibid. [2] Buber, I and Thou, p. 16.

[3] Ibid., pp. 98f. [4] Ibid., p. 46.

upon the person that persists beyond the loss of immediacy. "These moments are immortal, and most transitory of all; no content may be secured from them, but their power invades creation and the knowledge of man, beams of their power stream into the ordered world and dissolve it again and again."[1]

The immortal moments of the "I-Thou" encounters fade, they lose their exclusive immediacy and the person finds himself once again dealing with experience in detached terms, dealing with life in the realm of "I-It." This is inevitable; "the exalted melancholy of our fate," for the person attempts to extract and preserve the core of the "I-Thou" encounter for recollection and in that instant he detaches himself from it. He becomes conscious of his self as "experiencing" this encounter and is concerned to utilize the truth of the relation. Utility, as we know, is the mark of the "It" realm. Therefore, the truth disclosed in the "Thou" encounter can never be possessed. "It is your present; only while you have it do you have the present. You can make it into an object for yourself, to experience and to use; you must continually do this—and as you do it you have no more present."[2]

But this predicament does not force Buber to succumb to the contemporary process of relativizing truth. Although painfully aware of the factors that might produce such a reaction, so much so that he says: "This relativization was justified in that it bound the 'truth' of man to his conditioning reality,"[3] he feels that the process can easily go too far. For man cannot be comprehended in his totality by conditioning factors—social or psychic—because taken in his total reality man is a being who wrestles with the truth and ". . .

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[1] Ibid., p. 31. [2] Ibid., p. 33.

[3] "The Question to the Single One," Between Man and Man, p. 81.

we find that the force of his desire for truth can at times [in the moments of his "I-Thou" encounters] burst the 'ideological' bonds of his social beings."[1]

Here Buber is employing the argument that man's very capacity to distinguish between truth and ideology, between the conditioned and the unconditioned in his thinking, witnesses to a truth which is unconditioned, to that truth which condemns as ideologies the conditioned representations of truth that men flaunt in its stead.

Buber is profoundly existential in this view of truth. It is unconditioned, but he asks: "What is the real situation? Is there a truth we can possess?. . . .There certainly is none we can pick up and put in our pockets."[2] His resolution of this problem is strongly reminiscent of Kierkegaard's definition of truth: "An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness is. . .the highest truth attainable for an existing individual."[3]

Buber's ground for the "objective uncertainty" of truth inheres in the transitory character of the "I-Thou" encounter, and in the fact that any attempt to preserve it transforms it into conditioned truth. Therefore, like Kierkegaard, Buber concludes that one cannot possess the truth, one can only live toward it. "Human truth becomes real when one tries to translate one's relationship to truth into the reality of one's life. And human truth can be

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[1] Ibid.

[2] "The Prejudices of Youth," trans. Olga Marx, Israel and the World, p. 46.

[3] Soren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, trans. David F. Swenson, completed and provided with introduction and notes by Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 182.

communicated only if one throws one's self into the process and answers for it with one's self."[1]

Yet Buber is aware that even this living relationship to truth, whereby one answers for it with one's self, provides no objective guarantee of its validity, and that is why his view of truth is so profoundly existential. However, this view of truth is certainly problematic, as are many other aspects of the philosophy of "I and Thou," and it is the problematic character of this philosophy which we shall now consider.

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[1]"The Prejudices of Youth," Israel and the World, p. 46; see also, "The Question to the Single One," Between Man and Man, p. 82.

CHAPTER III

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REALMS

Buber's Radical Anthropomorphism

The philosophy of "I and Thou" is the most radically anthropomorphic body of thought to be presented by any Western philosopher. What the Bible makes explicit regarding the man and woman, "Now Adam knew Eve his wife and she conceived and bore Cain,"[1] namely, that the truest knowledge which men have of each other comes through their most intimate relatedness—for which the sexual act is the most appropriate example and symbol—Buber accepts and amplifies. Certainly the sexual act can serve as an appropriate symbol for the "I-Thou" encounter, insofar as both are intimate, mutual, direct, and exclusive. However, where the Bible extends this mode of knowing only to man's relations to God, to the ultimate, Buber goes still further and regards this encounter between man and man as the model for all significant knowing. Meaning arises in dialogic relation, whether that relation is to other men, to the inanimate, to animals, to objects of artistic creativity, or to ideas. Buber is not unaware of the radical character of his dialogic assertions. We have seen that he regards our relations with men alone as the sphere in which the encounters between "I and Thou" take place in fully developed form, in the mutuality of speech and counter-speech. Yet he insists that the differences

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[1]Gen. 4:1.

between the spheres of relation in which speech is not possible and the human sphere are less significant than the fundamental similarity of attitude which is found wherever "Thou" encounters take place.

This extremely anthropomorphic formulation of his basic intuition of existence may in part be understood in the context of the existential reaction against one of the most prominent features of modern life and thought—the dehumanization of man. The mechanistic world view which represented a philosophical response to the success of Newtonian physics was one of the first developments which led to man's being regarded as an object among others, a thing to be studied and controlled. The Industrial Revolution was the chief influence in modern times leading to a radical dehumanization in the social sphere; men came to be regarded as parts of machines, though more refractory and less useful than these. The profoundly personal aspects of man's being were devalued, except in the midst of romantic reactions which tended to value the subjective and emotional in direct opposition to the objective and rational.

We have already seen that Existentialism represents an attempt to overcome the radical cleavage between subjectivism and objectivity, by means of an intuition of immediate experience that will do full justice to the distinctively human in man. Buber's philosophy of "I and Thou" is an attempt to show that the meaning which comes to man in his deepest moments of human relatedness is not something to be attributed to man's capacity for fantasy, or to any other merely psychological function of man, but rather that this meaning is rooted in being—that the way in which meaning comes to be disclosed in the intimacy of human relatedness is an instance of the way man finds meaning in relations with all forms of being. In other words, Buber, like all Existentialists

would speak not merely psychologically but ontologically.[1]

> If the philosophy of personal Existence is right in maintaining that immediate experience is the door to the creative "Source" of Being, it is necessary for the concepts describing immediate experience to be at the same time descriptive of the structure of Being itself.[2]

What is distinctive about Buber's thought, then, is not the existential character of the enterprise, but the radically personal character of his concepts and terminology.

Are All "Thous" of Equal Worth

The basis of Buber's distinction between the "I-Thou" relation and the "I-It" attitude must not be understood as inhering in distinctions between beings. This point must continually be reasserted because it is continually misunderstood. Again and again, it is approached in light of the Kantian dictum that we must never treat a person only as a thing or as a means to an end. Even Ronald Gregor Smith, the translator of I and Thou, has made this mistake: "There is, Buber shows, a radical difference between man's attitude to other men and his attitude to things. The attitude to other men is a relation between persons, to things it is a connexion with objects."[3] This is true enough, but it radically misrepresents Buber, who would have to insist that man's attitude toward things is also at times that of a "Thou" relation,

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[1] We shall consider Buber's ontology at greater length after we have discussed his views of God.

[2] Tillich, "Existential Philosophy," op. cit., pp. 57f.

[3] Buber, I and Thou, p. vi.

and man's attitude toward persons is, on all too many occasions, one which perceives them as objects. This, Buber acknowledges, is the "exalted melancholy of our fate" that we cannot always treat others as our "Thou."

There have been many other readers who have repeated Dr. Smith's error. For example, William Cole, in his Sex in Christianity and Psychoanalysis, says that Buber

> . . .regards it as perfectly legitimate for a person to use or exploit a thing; to treat it as the means to an end. That is what things are for. But it is never legitimate for a person to use another person. It is the essence of immorality to exploit another human being, to treat him as though he were a means to an end, instead of an end in himself.[1]

Mr. Cole, in attempting to state attitudes which Buber regards as legitimate, has succeeded in clearly stating the opposite. For Buber sees no demarcation between persons and things that can be defined by the attitude which man ought to take toward them. If we were to adopt Mr. Cole's setting of the problem, we would have to say that in Buber's view a thing should also never be treated as a thing, if what one means by a thing is an object that may be exploited with impunity. Things, too, ought to be regarded as "Thous."

Yet we may insist that Doctors Smith and Cole misinterpret Buber at this point and still disagree with Buber's position. Because Buber has no criterion for distinguishing between "Thous" in terms of value, he has no basis for valuing persons more highly than things. Surely this is an untenable position, and we have already noted that in his most recent writing on the subject, Der Mensch und sein Gebild,[2] Buber himself seemed on the verge of abandon-

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[1]William G. Cole, Sex in Christianity and Psychoanalysis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 26. For a perceptive exposition of this problem, see Helen Wodehouse "Martin Buber's 'I and Thou,'" Philosophy, XX (1945), 17-19.

[2]Sec. 4, pp. 27-35.

ing it, and of allowing for a distinction between persons and things according to their intrinsic natures, thus providing the basis for a difference in man's evaluation of them. Yet in the end he reaffirmed the element of mutuality in his description of man's encounter with nature, because, despite all the difficulties entailed in speaking of mutuality in this context, and Buber sees them as clearly as do his critics, he is true to the sense of mutuality that he has experienced in the encounters themselves. He has been witnessing to these encounters for many years, and in 1901, in "Über Jakob Boehme," he wrote: "And from time to time we are seized by the desire to put our arms around a young tree and to feel the welling of life resembling [our own] or to read our most peculiar secret in the eyes of a dumb animal."[1]

Yet, even if we grant Buber the experienced reality of some sense of mutuality in his encounters with the realm of nature, surely it is so tenuous that the difference between his "dialogic" encounters with nature and his "I-Thou" encounters with man are more significant than the similarities. After all, he admits that in our life with men alone ". . .what confronts us has blossomed into the full reality of the Thou."[2] Man with man is, after all, the paradigm—there remains something so peculiarly appropriate to speaking of an "I-Thou" encounter with man that Buber must acknowledge that he can speak of an "I-Thou" encounter with a tree, to which he can ascribe no "I," only by analogy. That is why the tension involved in speaking of an "I-Thou" encounter with a tree was only heightened by his extensive examination of this

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[1] Martin Buber, "Über Jakob Boehme," Wiener Rundschau, Vol. V, No. 12 (June 15, 1901), p. 253. (my translation).

[2] I and Thou, p. 103.

issue in Der Mensch und sein Gebild.

Turning to ethical considerations, the tension becomes even more acute. After all, would Buber himself be prepared to defend the thesis that a corporation which exploits a mineral resource is morally reprehensible to the same degree as a corporation which exploited children? This example is meant to indicate the force behind that almost self-evident Kantian distinction which Buber rejects. However, Buber is not without reply to this criticism.

Inner motivation is a vital aspect of any action. Therefore, exploitation of things is wrong, since if a man falls into the habit of exploitation his inner life must be radically affected—exploitation of things by a person is bound to induce the habit of exploitation, so that he will in the end callously exploit people. Then too, the evil that men do lives after them. The dust bowls which plague this country testify to the fact that exploitation of things often, even if unwittingly, leads to exploitation of people. For many thousands have suffered grievously because of dust storms and the like. However, the answer which is most intrinsically related to Buber's own thinking is the experiential answer implied in the words just quoted from "Über Jakob Boehme." Buber refuses to draw a fundamental distinction between persons as exclusive partners in the "I-Thou" relation, and things as the only proper objects of the "I-It" relation, because the encounters are intuitions of immediate personal experience, and his experience is that both attitudes are experienced in relation to both types of objects.

However, Buber's account of the dialogic character of man's relation to the sphere of nature must be regarded as both descriptively and ethically inadequate. He can, after all, ascribe no "I," no consciousness similar to

his own, to the tree, and, in the end, he would be forced to acknowledge a difference between exploiting men and exploiting natural resources. If he failed to do so, he would in his very effort to "humanize" our attitudes toward nature by making it a "Thou" only succeed in contributing to the modern dehumanization of man against which he has struggled.

Meaning and Utility

Professor Montague opens a discussion of the interrelation of mysticism and pragmatism in the thought of some recent philosophers, particularly Bergson, with the observation that these two methods seem radically opposed to one another. The pragmatist derives his conclusions from externally observable action while the mystic looks to an inner and spiritual source. It is, of course, startling that a given thinker should combine the two, yet Montague claims that Bergson does so. He says that Bergson gives a pragmatic account of the origin and growth of science and all other intellectual categories by claiming that the life force evolves thought as an instrument for the practical control of environment.

> This alleged utilitarian origin and utilitarian purpose of men's intellect is regarded by the ordinary pragmatist as a mark of its validity. Indeed, truth and utility are thought of as virtually identical. For Bergson, however, it is quite otherwise. The pragmatic value of thought is for him a bar to, rather than a confirmation of, its truthfulness. In order to know the inner nature of reality, we must abandon intellect and resort to intuition.[1]

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[1] Montague, op. cit., p. 216.

This analysis of Bergson is not presented because it fits Buber to the letter, but because it points to the extreme tension between utility and meaning in Buber's thought. We have seen that a person must adopt the attitude of detachment in order to use the knowledge gained in relation, whether to use it scientifically, aesthetically, or in any other way. Such utility involves converting the "I-Thou" relation into one that belongs to the "I-It" world. Since in Buber's view, the "I-Thou" encounter alone can be the bearer of meaning, utility and meaning would seem to be mutually exclusive in the dialogic philosophy. "Of course, in that instant in which I try to use the nearness and intimacy [to the other in the "Thou" relation] . . .as knowledge, I give up the dimension of 'I-Thou' and lose contact with the substance without gaining an adequate knowledge."[1]

Yet Buber would be most unhappy with the notion expressed by Montague in his comments on Bergson that in order to gain meaning through intuition we must abandon the intellect. We must remember that in his example of a "Thou" encounter with a tree, Buber stated that "to effect this ["Thou" relation] it is not necessary for me to give up any of the ways in which I consider the tree. There is nothing from which I would have to turn my eyes away in order to see, and no knowledge that I would have to forget."[2] Buber thus would recognize the distinction between utilitarian knowledge and meaning, but he rejects any notion of a dichotomy between them. Yet, having declared that there is no dichotomy, that the insights of the world of "It" do not have to

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[1]Buber, "Zu Bergsons Begriff der Intuition," Hinweise, p. 223. (my translation).

[2]I and Thou, p. 7.

be abandoned when one is engaged in a "Thou" encounter, Buber lets the matter drop. He says nothing that would explain why the taking up of the "It" modes of knowledge into the "Thou" encounter would not involve the counter-movement of a distancing that leads to detachment. Neither does he elaborate upon the relation of the "It" elements taken up into the "Thou" encounter to the meaning revealed by the immediate presence of the "Thou." In fact, in one context, Buber has stated that these cannot be distinguished: "We shall certainly be able to make no distinction, in what he [the existential thinker] has, time and again, discovered as the truth, between what can and what cannot be derived from the social factor."[1]

This raises the question of whether Buber feels that a pure "Thou" encounter is possible. He never gives an unequivocal answer to this problem. In the statement just quoted, dealing with truth in the realm of politics, he seems to feel that "It" elements are inextricably interwoven with the meaningful elements of "Thou." Furthermore, in "Distance and Relation" he emphasizes the interrelatedness of the two fundamental movements that constitute the realms of "It" and "Thou." Both distancing and relating establish the other as independent, but in the former case man steps back in detachment from the other and uses this other in a way that does not confirm its individual otherness, while in the latter case he confirms this otherness by entering into full bodily relation.[2] Yet

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[1] "The Question to the Single One," Between Man and Man, p. 81. From the context it is evident that Buber, in using the term "the social factor," is referring to what he regards as the reductionist categories of sociological thought.

[2] "Distance and Relation," op. cit., see especially pp. 112f.

elsewhere, in talking of the purity with which two men may listen to the music of Mozart, he seems to imagine that the "Thou" attitude can be maintained without any admixture of the "It" attitude.[1] In still another highly significant statement, Buber seems to declare that pure "I-Thou" encounters do occur, but rarely: "The It is the eternal chrysalis, the Thou the eternal butterfly—except that the situations do not always follow one another in clear succession, but often there is a happening profoundly twofold, confusedly entangled."[2]

The untangling of the confusion that Buber refers to here is a crucial enterprise for his dialogic philosophy. Only by describing the process whereby the "It" elements are brought up into the "Thou" encounter, could Buber support his position that in the reality of the "Thou" encounter, "there is nothing from which I would have to turn my eyes away in order to see, and no knowledge that I would have to forget." Furthermore, we have seen that in one case at least, that of an "I-Thou" encounter in the political realm, Buber does not feel that the conditioned "Thou" elements can be distinguished from the conditioned "It" elements. Yet if Buber is to avoid a dichotomy between utility and meaning, he ought to develop his views of these issues, on the relation of the "It" and the "Thou" elements in relational encounters. Instead, without presenting material to support his position, we find that he merely assures us that it is not necessary to abandon the results of intellectual cognition and the other forms of "It" knowledge in the intuitive encounter with a "Thou."

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[1] "What is Man?", Between Man and Man, p. 204.

[2] I and Thou, pp. 17f.

Here, then, is an instance of the kind of procedure which justifies the designation of Buber as "A Prophet in Philosophical Clothing."

Buber and Subjectivity

Buber uses language appropriate to the profoundly personal character of the relation of love between man and woman in an effort to describe the unfolding of meaning to man in his encounter with all beings. He insists that this meaning is not something which happens within the individual psyche, and which is valid only for the individual, but that the meaning is something which takes place "between" man and the concrete other bodied over against him. This meaning discloses the nature of reality and is valid for all men. In other words, Buber insists that the "Thou" encounters are not merely psychological in their significance, but that they have an ontological significance—they reveal the nature of being. While Buber's ontology will not be discussed at length until his treatment of God is presented, some evaluation is necessary in this epistemological context.

The question emerges in epistemological form when we consider the relation of Buber's intuition of the "Thou" relation to the traditional subject-object problem. Maurice Friedman claims that Buber's dialogic philosophy presents a valid epistemology that moves beyond all distinctions between subjects and objects. An examination of Friedman's chapter on "Buber's Theory of Knowledge,"[1] will show that Dr.

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[1] Friedman, The Life of Dialogue, pp. 161-175.

Friedman fails to substantiate this claim. He accepts Buber's verbal resolution of epistemological problems without grappling with the underlying issues.

In this chapter Friedman summarizes the epistemological issue in philosophy as one which deals with the nature of the relations between subjects and objects. He claims that differences arise as to whether it is the subject or the object that is the more real, as to the nature of the subject and as to the nature of the object. He then presents Buber's intuition of the "I-Thou" encounter as cutting underneath all these distinctions between traditional epistemological positions—between all types of subject-object knowledge. Friedman adds that the subject-object type of knowledge is really the "I-It" realm of the dialogic philosophy, and that it is derived from the meaning perceived in the "I-Thou" encounters.

How, we may ask, does this happen? In answer, Friedman describes the "Thou" encounter as one characterized by mutuality, directness, presentness, intensity, and ineffability. He then says that "the I-Thou relation is a direct knowing which gives one neither knowledge about the Thou over against one nor about oneself as an objective entity apart from this relationship."[1]

Although this knowing in the "I-Thou" relation is direct, Friedman states that it is nevertheless partially mediated, mediated by the senses and by the technical means of symbolic communication, such as language and art. Therefore, in his view, the relation between subject-object knowledge and the truth—the meaning disclosed in "I-Thou" encounters—is that between a symbol

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[1] Ibid., pp. 165f.

and the reality it symbolizes, and he says that:

> It is only when the symbolical character of subject-object knowledge is forgotten or remains undiscovered (as is often the case) that this "knowledge" ceases to point back toward the reality of direct dialogical knowing and becomes instead an obstruction to it.[1]

This is an excellent presentation of Buber's position, and we may well feel sympathetically disposed towards it. However, this position certainly raises problems which do not seem to trouble Dr. Friedman. When we ask the question, "Just which 'I-It' subject-object symbols are most appropriate to the true knowing of the 'I-Thou' encounters," we open Pandora's Box, and all the problems that have bedevilled traditional epistemology come tumbling forth once again.

Dr. Friedman sees the presentness of the true dialogic encounter as the guarantor of its immunity to criticism. He says that one cannot subject the "knowing" of the "Thou" encounter to rational criteria of truth or falsity because these criteria are derived from the realm of "It," wherein that which had been over against one and fully present as a "Thou" is subdued into the causal nexus of past events and studied as an object. This involves such a radical falsification of the "Thou" encounter that it is logically impossible to criticize it by means of such criteria. Thus, in illustration, Friedman says:

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[1] Ibid., p. 166.

> It is the presentness of the I-Thou relation which shows most clearly the logical impossibility of criticizing I-Thou knowing on the basis of any system of I-It. Although psychology, for example, may show that many human relations which are thought genuine are actually neurotic projections from the past and hence I-It, it cannot question the fundamental reality of the I-Thou relation nor establish any external "objectively" valid criteria as to which relations are I-Thou and which I-It.[1]

He insists that psychology, like any science, can only describe phenomena after they have taken their place in reliable categories of human knowing, only after the direct and present knowing of the "I-Thou" encounter has been lost.

Yet, if Friedman takes this position how can he allow that psychology may show that "many human relations which are thought genuine are actually neurotic projections from the past and hence I-It"? How can he allow the psychologist to show us that what we thought of as a true "I-Thou" encounter was a false neurotic projection, and then deny to the psychologist the right to establish "any external objectively valid" criteria as to which relations are "I-Thou" and which are "I-It"? In other words, we must again refer to the central question—if the relation between the realms is one of symbol and the reality symbolized, by what means do we distinguish between valid and invalid symbols? While Dr. Friedman does present an account of Buber's use of symbols,[2] he does not come to grips with this crucial problem.

Dr. Friedman criticizes the logical positivists for judging ". . .the present by the past as if there were no present reality until that reality had become past and therefore capable of being dealt with in our thought

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[1] Ibid., p. 168.

[2] Ibid., pp. 166-168.

categories."[1] Yet here we may interpose objections similar to those urged against his illustration from psychology. While it is true that a symbol ought not to be equated with that which it symbolizes, and a person present ought not to be confused with those qualities of his which we recollect after he is no longer present, we can certainly distinguish between those qualities which we recollect falsely and those which truly characterize him. For we may see him again and compare our recollection of the color of his hair, with the hair itself. Yet this kind of testing is impossible within the framework of Buber's dialogic thought. For in the midst of a "Thou" encounter, we cannot engage in verification, since the effort of verifying would itself involve an element of detachment, would destroy the exclusive presentness of the "Thou," and plunge the relation into the "It" realm. Therefore, in the moments of the "Thou" encounter we cannot verify the adequacy of the various "I-It" symbols which point to the event.

Against Dr. Friedman's argument it should be noted that the traditional epistemological disputes were not concerned to employ distinctions between subjects and objects merely for the sake of creating complex systems of terminology. They involved the question of the possibility and the reliability of human knowledge. Dr. Friedman claims that Buber's dialogic philosophy resolves these problems, but they re-emerge in a new guise, in the form of the adequacy of "I-It" symbols to the "I-Thou" encounter. Within the framework of the dialogic philosophy, one sees no basis for testing the adequacy of these symbols, not even of the "I-Thou"

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[1] Ibid., p. 169.

symbol itself. Therefore, this philosophy is plagued by the same problems that trouble traditional epistemology at least insofar as knowledge relates to questions of meaning and value.

In fact, within the framework of Buber's epistemology, it is impossible for him to justify the various changes in terminology that marked the development of his thought from his earliest writings at the turn of the century, to its definitive formulation in I and Thou. At one point in this work, he exclaims:

> O fragment of mica, looking on which I once learned, for the first time, that I is not something "in me"— with you I was nevertheless bound up in myself; at that time the event took place only in me, not between me and you.[1]

Buber is here referring to an encounter which he described in Daniel,[2] and takes issue with his description of the encounter because he feels that at the time he was still under the influence of a kind of mystical idealism which made him regard the event as one which took place within himself rather than "between" himself and the mica bodied over against him. Buber's language here might suggest that the encounter with the mica was not a full "I-Thou" encounter. It is important that we recognize that the encounter was a full "I-Thou" encounter and of course could not change; what changed was Buber's interpretation of the event.[3] In writing I and Thou, he came to feel that the language of Daniel was too psychological that it neglected the ontological implications of the experience. In other

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[1] I and Thou, p. 98.

[2] Martin Buber, Daniel, Gespräche von der Verwirklichung (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1919), pp. 146f.

[3] "Two of the specific experiences which Buber mentions in the essay on Boehme—that of kinship with a tree and that of looking into the eyes of a dumb animal—are later used in I and Thou as an example not of unity but of the I-Thou relation. Yet the emotional content of the experiences as described in the two works is almost identical!" (Friedman, The Life of Dialogue, p. 49.)

contexts he writes of childhood experiences that were full "I-Thou" encounters,[1] but he used a great variety of terms to describe these experiences before his thought reached its final formulation in I and Thou. As Dr. Friedman puts it:

> Already in 1916 Buber made his first draft of I and Thou, but it was in 1919 that he 'first attained decisive clarity.' In the light of his new understanding he undertakes to explain those parts of his earlier writings which now appear to him inexact or conducive to misunderstanding.[2]

On what basis can Buber claim that I and Thou is a more adequate expression of the reality of the encounter than the language of Daniel or that of his other early works? If we say that this new language points more effectively to the reality of the relation, the question emerges at another level, for we must then ask, why does it point to it more effectively?

Thus it would seem that Buber must introduce criteria of verification if he is to have any valid basis for regarding his dialogic philosophy as a more adequate account of reality than his previous formulations. Furthermore, the very fact that Buber can claim, on reflection, that his dialogic philosophy offers a more adequate account of an encounter long past, indicates that Dr. Friedman has gone too far when he protests that logical positivists can make no valid criticisms of the "Thou" encounter since they refuse to deal with any experience that is fully present. Surely when Buber writes about his childhood

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[1] "Dialogue," Between Man and Man, p. 23.

[2] The Life of Dialogue, p. 52.

relation with a horse he is not dealing with a reality that is fully present, but he too is struggling to interpret properly the significance of "Thou" encounters that were once fully present long after they have become a part of the past.

Buber himself is certainly aware of this problem—he knows that the language of "I and Thou" cannot be identified with the meaning disclosed in the encounter. For this reason, he refers to the "genuine conversation" that takes place "between man and man" as a secret accompaniment to the sensible phonetic event.[1] Yet the "I-Thou" language is, in Buber's view, superior to his former modes of expressing the meaning disclosed in the encounter. In point of fact, he does employ an implicit criterion of symbolic adequacy, namely, that the language of "I and Thou" has a greater power for evoking "I-Thou" encounters in others, and its terms seem to fit their recollection of previous "Thou" encounters in a more satisfactory way. The problem which is involved in this criterion is that of Buber's capacity to communicate with those who do not find the language of "I and Thou" evocative of meaning. If he were to employ more objectifying language, he would be more comprehensible to them, but he would be using language which, in his view, would involve an even greater distortion of the lived reality of the encounter. This is the "problem of subjectivity" as manifested in Buber's writings, for the man who remains unmoved by the "I-Thou" language naturally charges Buber with subjectivism. In the next section we shall note that this is a part of the predicament of all Existentialists, and we shall return to it again the the context of

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[1] Buber, "Zwischenmenschlichen," dialogische Prinzip, p. 262.

Buber's existential interpretation of revelation.

A final point—Friedman's talk of the "I-Thou" relation as a "direct knowing," even though he qualifies this by saying that this knowing gives no knowledge of either term of the relation taken in itself, suggests that there is a content to the "I-Thou" encounters, and that the adequacy of the symbolic subject-object or "It" knowledge can be tested against this content.[1] This is misleading. As we have already observed, Buber explicitly states that no content may be secured from the transitory moments of the "Thou" encounters.[2] Yet, Buber's thought does have content, but to discover the source of this content, we cannot turn to his descriptions of the "I-Thou" encounters and list their characteristics—immediacy, exclusiveness, mutuality, and the rest; to discover the content of Buber's thought, we must turn to revelation.

Existentialism's Search for Content—
The Turning to Revelation

In his Systematic Theology, Professor Tillich presents an analysis of "The Cognitive Function of Reason,"[3] which is strikingly similar to Buber's views as these are expressed in "Distance and Relation." In Tillich's terminology, cognition is characterized by dual functions of detachment and

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[1] Friedman, The Life of Dialogue, pp. 165ff.

[2] I and Thou, p. 31.

[3] Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951—), 94-105.

union. A subject grasps an object and there is a process of mutual adaptation. Yet the union that takes place by means of the adaptation is a peculiar one since its presupposition is separation. Here we see a direct parallel to Buber's idea of the movement of distance as the presupposition of the movement of relation. Tillich goes on to discuss knowing as the fulfillment of a deep desire; the reunion with the object is a reunion with that to which we belong, and which belongs to us. He then considers a still deeper role of knowledge, that of transforming and healing. Psychotherapy is cited as an instance of this latter role of knowledge; in it the person is reconciled with his past and through this is reconciled to himself.[1]

Tillich elaborates two types of knowledge in terms of this distinction between detachment and union, and here again there is a remarkable parallel to Buber. For the knowledge determined by the element of detachment which Tillich calls "controlling" knowledge is remarkably similar to "I-It" knowledge, while Tillich calls the knowledge which is determined by the element of union "receiving" knowledge, and this form of knowledge, as Tillich elaborates the concept, is strikingly similar to the meaning disclosed by the "I-Thou" encounter. Tillich insists that "receiving" knowledge is not a subjective abberration of the psyche, but that it is a function of cognition and that "a truly objective relation to man is determined by the element of union. . . .Without union there is no cognitive approach to man."[2] In

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[1] Ibid., pp. 94ff.

[2] Ibid., p. 98.

Tillich's thought, as in Buber's, the knowledge that heals, transforms, and is the bearer of meaning is knowledge for which man's relation with man, here termed a relation of cognitive union, is the model.

Tillich then turns to the modern situation in which the polar tension within cognitive reason, a tension between detachment and union, has been disregarded. The success of "controlling" knowledge in the scientific enterprise, especially in the technological application of scientific research, has been so vast that "controlling" knowledge has come to be regarded as the whole of knowledge; it has claimed hegemony over every level of reality. Every cognitive attempt which would emphasize union is regarded with distrust, since "receiving" knowledge lacks the precision, the public accessibility, and the verifiability of "controlling" knowledge.

Tillich sees Existentialism as a reaction to this situation in which cognition and the social life have been dehumanized because "receiving" knowledge, the form of cognition most appropriate to relations between men, has been disregarded. Yet in the long run Existentialism like the other reactions to this situation—romanticism and the philosophy of life—does not solve ". . .the problem of the criterion of the false and the true."[1] What Tillich then says of the intuition which underlies the philosophy of life is equally true of the primary intuition which underlies the approach of the existential thinker to existence.

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[1] Ibid., p. 99.

> How can the intuitive union in which life is aware of itself be verified? If it is unexpressible, it is not knowledge. If it can be expressed, it falls under the criterion of cognitive reason, and its application demands detachment, analysis and objectification.[1]

We have already observed the relevance of this analysis to Buber's thought. If the meaning, or what Friedman calls the "direct knowing," of the "I-Thou" encounter is not expressible, how can one properly call it knowledge, and if it is expressible, how can one avoid criteria of verification even in the midst of the full presentness of the encounter. "The relation between receiving and controlling knowledge," says Tillich, "is not explained by Bergson or by any other of the life-philosophers."[2] Buber, too, fails to explain it. He says that "I-It" or "controlling" knowledge is taken up into "I-Thou" or "receiving" knowledge, but he does not explain just how this can take place, or what the interrelation between them would be after the "It" knowledge has been taken up. Furthermore, Friedman, who properly treats "I-It" knowledge as symbolic of the meaning disclosed in the "I-Thou" dimension, also fails to explain the relation because he does not deal with the question of symbolic adequacy. In addition, he does not deal adequately with the symbolic character of the "I-Thou" language itself.

Tillich, on the other hand, is keenly aware of the cogency of the positivist criticism of traditional metaphysics and theology. He says that "the verifying test belongs to the nature of truth; in this positivism is right," because "'verification' means a method of deciding the truth or falsehood of a judgment. Without such a method, judgments are expressions of the subjective state of a person but not acts of cognitive reason."[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 100. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 102.

Tillich grapples with this problem by presenting two modes of verification. The first, the method of experimental verification is one which is appropriate to "controlling" knowledge, and one which has the advantage of methodological strictness, the possibility of safely and accurately testing the hypothesis in every moment. However, the other mode of verification, which he calls the experiential one, can only test the validity of propositions in the midst of the life process; it does not halt or disrupt the life process in order to isolate calculable elements of it for experiments. Tillich acknowledges the fact that this method is inexact and that its results are indefinite and preliminary so that the one who would act upon them (as in the case of marriage after the test of an engagement, or hiring after the test of an interview) is involved in risk. Yet, in his view, since life is characterized by spontaneity, individuality, and the sense of totality, this experiential verification must necessarily be employed if we are to validate those profoundly experienced aspects of life which cannot be isolated, ordered, and dealt with in general terms.

Tillich is also clearer than Buber in that when he talks of the interrelation of "controlling" and "receiving" knowledge he elaborates upon the nature of the relation. Man can be partly known by means of "controlling" knowledge in such sciences as biology, psychology, and sociology; and physicians, psychotherapists, educators, and political leaders must use this knowledge as well as "receiving" knowledge in order to perform their tasks properly.

Furthermore, when Tillich deals with the exact way in which "controlling" knowledge may criticize the content of "receiving" knowledge, he makes the point that the various sciences can help us to reject false

revelation, such as ecstatic experiences which are the results of pathological aberrations, but he insists that this form of knowledge cannot stand in ultimate judgment upon true revelations since the character of these is to point beyond the realm of scientific knowledge.[1] Friedman, to be sure, made the same point in insisting that psychology can criticize a neurotic but not a true "I-Thou" encounter. However, Friedman, in contrast to Tillich, rejected the possibility of any kind of criterion of verification being available to the psychologist for distinguishing between the true "I-Thou" encounter and the neurotic one.

By means of these examples, we can see that the crucial distinction between Tillich and Buber in these epistemological concepts is as much a matter of method as it is one of content. Many of their ideas are strikingly similar, but even when elaborating these similar ideas Tillich treats the issues of epistemology in a thoroughly philosophical way. He presents his views systematically and is concerned at every point to set them in the context of both the history of Western thought and of contemporary formulations of the theory of knowledge. Certainly it is possible to criticize many of Tillich's specific formulations, to feel that he does not present sufficient evidence for his claim that "controlling" knowledge cannot ultimately judge the true revelations, or for his anterior claim that ". . .it is not permissible to make the experimental method of verification the exclusive pattern of all verification."[2] But Tillich is fully aware of

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[1] Ibid., pp. 117f., 129-131.

[2] Ibid., p. 102.

the need for such evidence, and he does deal with issues in terms of cognitive argument. He recognizes the need for cognitive criteria in the realm of "receiving" knowledge and purposefully establishes such criteria. Although it is possible to criticize the validity of the specific criteria chosen, it is clear that Tillich's approach and method is intrinsically philosophical. By contrast, Buber by-passes so many crucial issues posited by the "I-It" - "I-Thou" distinction that one may well call him "A Prophet in Philosophical Clothing."

Two significant aspects of Buber's epistemology emerge from this criticism. The first is the unsystematic character of its presentation—it fails to define many issues and to elaborate others. The second is that this epistemology is purely existential in character and if consistently applied would yield no cognitive content, so that Tillich's analysis of Existentialism's cognitive predicament is as applicable to the epistemological emphases of Buber's dialogic philosophy as it is to any other body of existential thought. Tillich says that:

> Existentialism tries to save the freedom of the individual self from the domination of controlling knowledge. But this freedom is described in terms which not only lack any criterion but also any content. Existentialism is the most desperate attempt to escape the power of controlling knowledge and of the objectified world which technical reason has produced. It says "No" to this world, but, in order to say "Yes" to something else, it has either to use controlling knowledge or to turn to revelation.[1]

Buber, of course, turns to revelation.

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[1] Ibid. p. 100.

PART TWO

REVELATION AS APPROPRIATED IN HOLY INSECURITY

CHAPTER IV

THE DIALOGIC CHARACTER OF REVELATION

The Contemporary Setting of the Problem of Revelation

There have been two common misunderstandings of the nature of revelation. The first is that of fundamentalism which regards revelation as a process whereby different biblical figures had been inspired by God to proclaim his truth in the form of verbal propositions. This view has been called the "dictation" theory because its model was that of a supernatural process of dictation in which the recipient of the divine word was wholly passive, acting as a kind of dictaphone which succeeded in transmitting the divine message to mankind. The details of this process were shrouded in obscurity since this theory held that the process had ceased to occur with the end of biblical times.

As a result of the prevelance of this interpretation, the phenomenon of revelation itself became increasingly irrelevant. Under the impact of rationalism and humanism many thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rejected it as utterly impossible. Others regarded it as a device which would publish truths theoretically discoverable by reason to a world that might otherwise fail to uncover them, or to a world that would tend to forget them. According to this attitude it was man's rational and sensory faculties which genuinely discovered truth, so that revelation at

best was a popularizing or a mnemonic device.[1]

Hegel's idealism sought to enclose Christian truth within its dialectical rational system. Kierkegaard's protest against this effort is the point of departure for modern reinterpretations of revelation as a form of existential communication between God and man. He begins his examination of revelation with a study of the problem of knowledge as it is posited by Plato's dialogue, the Meno. Here the difficulty expressed by Socrates is that ". . .one cannot seek for what he knows, and it seems equally impossible for him to seek what he does not know."[2] For if he knows it, there is no need for him to seek it, and if he does not know it, he has no possibility of seeking it, for he is altogether ignorant of it. In order to resolve this dilemma, Socrates presents the doctrine of recollection which claims that man does in fact know what he seeks but has forgotten it, so that a teacher must act as a midwife to help him in recollecting it, that is, into bodying forth that which is innate within him. Socrates illustrates this by inducing an uneducated slave boy to demonstrate a theorem of Euclidian geometry.

In contrast to this human teacher who can only bring man to recall what he already knows, Kierkegaard sets God as a teacher, Who out of His love, would impart to man knowledge of His eternal and infinite nature.

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[1]Gustaf Aulen, Karl Barth, Sergius Bulgakoff, et. al., Revelation ed. by John Baillie and Hugh Martin (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1937), pp. xiv-xv. The method of allegory which has been used to some extent by all the great theologians of the past is regarded by Buber as one which fails to do justice to the concrete historicity, the Einmaligkeit of biblical revelation. "The Man of Today," Israel and the World, p. 97.

[2]Soren Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments or a Fragment of Philosophy, trans. with introduction and notes by David F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 5.

Such knowledge not only imparts to man that which he did not know, but that which he could not possibly have known without God's disclosure of it since man is involved in temporality and finitude. Because the knowledge imparted by God radically transforms a man, in that he now sees that his attitude towards himself and reality was radically wrong and that he must fundamentally alter it, Kierkegaard regards it as a creative teaching involving rebirth.

> But when God becomes a Teacher, his love cannot be merely seconding and assisting, but is creative, giving a new being to the learner, or as we have called him, the man born anew; by which designation we signify the transition from non-being to being. . . .Between man and man the Socratic midwifery is the highest relation and begetting is reserved for God, whose love is creative. . .[1]

Kierkegaard's view of the creative power of revelation is expressed with artistic originality. It is impossible to do justice to it in restating it. One can only hope to indicate that, in Kierkegaard's view, it necessarily involves a disclosure which could come to man in no other way because it deals with that which lies beyond those powers which are innate in man. It involves a fusion of the eternal and the temporal in a critical moment, a fusion which radically affects the very depths of man's being. Contemporary theologians must deal with Kierkegaard's powerful interpretation of revelation and Buber is no exception. In I and Thou he gives poetic expression to a similar view of revelation.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 23f.

> It is the phenomenon that a man does not pass, from the moment of the supreme meeting, the same being as he entered into it. . . .The man who emerges from the act of pure relation that so involves his being has now in his being something more that has grown in him, of which he did not know before and whose origin he is not rightly able to indicate.[1]

Tillich's systematic treatment of revelation succeeds in capturing this emphasis on the radical creative power of revelation, yet he sets his treatment of the phenomenon in the context of his analysis of cognition. Since we have already observed the relevance of this analysis to Buber's existential view of knowledge, it will be useful to examine Tillich's presentation. He regards revelation as ". . .the manifestation of something hidden which cannot be approached through ordinary ways of gaining knowledge."[2] The hiddeness involves the quality of "mystery" that characterizes a dimension of experience which "precedes" the subject-object relationship and therefore, it cannot be expressed in ordinary language which has grown out of, and is bound to, the subject-object scheme. God's self-disclosure remains a mystery even after revelation takes place, for if it did not, it would not be essentially mysterious. Yet something has been added to what Tillich calls "receiving" knowledge and what Buber calls the meaning of the "I-Thou" realm. What has been added concerns the experience of the reality of God and of His relation to man.[3]

Buber rightly speaks of revelation as a phenomenon which lies at the heart of religious faith. It is the key phenomenon on "our path in the

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[1] I and Thou, p. 109.

[2] Tillich, Systematic Theology, p. 108.

[3] Ibid., pp. 108f.

history of faith," which he says "is not a path from one kind of deity to another, but in fact a path from the 'God Who hides Himself' (Is. 45, 15) to the One that reveals Himself."[1] In terms of this analysis, we see that faith is reinterpreted along with revelation; it is no longer a matter of believing propositions which one regards as divinely dictated, but it is a part of the "I-Thou" encounter involving mutual response. In Tillich's view it is a form of cognitive response, of "receiving" knowledge, which involves intimate participation.

Revelation and the Bible

The existential character of biblical revelation.—Buber clearly expresses the contemporary theological understanding of the existential character of revelation. He rejects the "dictation" theory because "the man. . .who is the 'mouth' of the revelation is indeed this, not a speaking-tube or any other kind of instrument, but an organ, which sounds according to its own laws; and to sound means to modify."[2] He also rejects the theory of "religious genius" which would transform the content of revelation into an exclusively human product: "It is not man's own power that works here, nor is it God's pure effective passage, but it is a mixture of the divine and the human."[3]

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[1] Buber, The Prophetic Faith, p. 44.

[2] I and Thou, p. 117.

[3] Ibid.

Tillich calls attention to another existential quality of revelation—its concreteness: "Revelation, as revelation of the mystery which is our ultimate concern is invariably revelation for someone in a concrete situation of concern."[1] Buber recognizes this concreteness as fundamental to the character of revelation, indeed, he regards it as the basis for distinguishing between all genuine religion and philosophy: "The religious essence in every religion can be found in its highest certainty. That is the certainty that the meaning of existence is open and accessible in the actual lived concrete, not above the struggle with reality but in it."[2]

In this respect Buber distinguishes religion from philosophy which he claims always looks away from the concrete situation, and begins with the primary act of abstraction.[3] Buber elaborates this distinction between philosophy and religion by saying that:

> Philosophy is grounded on the presupposition that one sees the absolute in universals.
>
> In opposition to this, religion, when it has to define itself philosophically, says that it means the covenant of the absolute with the particular, with the concrete.[4]

No doubt Buber's understanding of revelation which emphasizes its relational and concrete, or, if you will, its dialogic character has been

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[1] Systematic Theology, p. 111.

[2] "Religion and Philosophy," trans. Maurice S. Friedman, Eclipse of God, p. 49.

[3] Ibid., p. 53.

[4] Ibid., p. 56.

influenced by existential philosophy. Without this philosophical development, in both its religious and its secular forms, Buber's particular understanding of revelation would be unthinkable. However, it is vitally important to note that Buber sees this Existentialism as rooted in the Bible. He makes this quite explicit in his exegesis of the first Psalm when he says that

> . . .the original meaning of the Hebrew verb 'to recognize, to know', in distinction from Western languages, belongs not to the sphere of reflection but to that of contact. The decisive event for 'knowing' in biblical Hebrew is not that one looks at an object, but that one comes into touch with it. This basic difference is developed in the realm of a relation of the soul to other beings, where the fact of mutuality changes everything. At the centre is not a perceiving of one another, but the contact of being, intercourse.[1]

The Bible then is still regarded as the "Word of God", in Buber's reinterpretation of revelation, but this concept must not be understood in the literal way that fundamentalism understands it. Buber recognizes the need for dealing with the biblical words as symbols, rather than as literal expressions of truth. As to his use of the concept of symbols, Maurice Friedman rightly sees that Buber breaks with the interpretive views of idealistic philosophy which regards symbols as individual examples of universal categories.[2] For Buber would focus on the revelatory character of the concrete itself, not upon the concrete as an instance of a universal: "A symbol is an appearance of meaning, the appearing and becoming apparent of meaning in the form of corporeality. The covenant of the Absolute with

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[1]"Right and Wrong," Good and Evil, p. 56.

[2]Friedman, The Life of Dialogue, pp. 225-233; see also, ibid., pp. 166-168.

the concrete is manifested in the symbol."[1]

To understand the role of the biblical "Word of God" as a symbol we must realize that for Buber, the "Word of God" is a symbol for the dialogic communication that takes place "between" man and God, it is not a symbol for God Himself. Just as dialogic communication can take place without the medium of speech, so too the biblical "Word of God" can be manifested independently of words. As Tillich puts it, ". . .the religious symbolism inside and outside the biblical literature. . . .uses seeing, feeling and tasting as often as hearing in describing the experience of the divine presence."[2] Buber, therefore, does not see the Bible as a series of verbal messages but rather as the record of a series of dialogic encounters: "The theme of the Bible is the encounter between a group of people and the Lord of the world in the course of history, the sequence of events occuring on earth."[3]

In Buber's view the only way that the Bible pictures God as communicating with man is in and through concrete events. There is no special "supernatural sphere" where such communication takes place; there is no special breed of men with supersensory apparatus capable of receiving God's message. Buber says that "the basic doctrine which fills the Hebrew Bible is that our life is a dialogue between the above and the below."[4]

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[1]Buber, "Symbolical and Sacramental Existence in Judaism," trans. Dr. Greta Hort and Canon Witton-Davies, Hasidism, p. 129.

[2]Systematic Theology, p. 123.

[3]"The Man of Today," Israel and the World, p. 89.

[4]"The Dialogue between Heaven and Earth," At the Turning, p. 48.

Therefore:

> The great achievement of Israel is not so much that it has told mankind of the one, real God, the origin and goal of all that exists, but rather that it has taught men that they can address this God in very reality, that men can say Thou to Him, that we human beings can stand face to face with Him, that there is communion between God and man.[1]

The dialogic continuity of revelation.—This treatment of the biblical word as one which is symbolic of dialogic communication between God and man in concrete events, raises the question of the relation between the biblical revelation and all other knowledge of God. This question has emerged in modern theology as the question of the relation between special and general revelation, it being agreed that all knowledge of God involves divine self-disclosure or revelation.[2]

The issue may be defined in the following terms: If the biblical, or what many thinkers call special, revelation is regarded as being continuous with non-biblical revelation or as these same thinkers call it, general revelation, indeed, if non-biblical revelation is deemed in any way possible, then biblical revelation must be regarded as only a particular instance of a knowledge of God which is possible to men in all of their cultural situations apart from the biblical frame of reference. In other words, such a view would be in danger of once again reducing revelation to a general human faculty, which is the one thing which the existential reinterpretation of revelation sought to avoid. On the other hand, if the possibility of revelation outside of the Bible is to be denied, if biblical revelation

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[1] "Spinoza, Sabbatai Zevi and the Baalshem," trans. Dr. Greta Hort and Canon Witton-Davies, Hasidism, p. 96.

[2] Aulén, Barth, Bulgakoff, et. al., op. cit., pp. xviii-xxi; see also, Alan Richardson, Christian Apologetics (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), chaps. v. and vi, especially pp. 116-121.

is to be made completely discontinuous with all other forms of knowledge of God then it would seem impossible to communicate it, and the biblical revelation would seem to be involved in that epistemological predicament of Existentialism which we discussed in the preceding chapter.

Buber is quite unequivocal at this point. Biblical revelation is a record of dialogic encounters and, as such, it is continuous with the "I-Thou" encounters of every day life. Speaking of the Bible and the man of today, Buber says that when we become aware of the revelatory dimensions within it:

> . . .we find out that revelation exists. And we set foot on the path which will reveal our life and the life of the world as a sign communication. The path is the approach. It is on this path that we shall meet with the major experience [biblical revelation] that is of the same kind as our minor experience [The "I-Thou" encounters of our every day life] .[1]

Buber generalizes this observation to include the major experiences of all great religions: "The mighty revelations to which the religions appeal are like in being with the quiet revelations that are to be found everywhere and at all times."[2]

Buber finds warrant for this position among the masters of Hasidism for he recounts two sayings which succinctly state this very point. The first is titled "Every Day" and the second, "Everywhere":

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[1]"The Man of Today," Israel and the World, pp. 98f.

[2]I and Thou, pp. 116f.

> The rabbi of Apt said:
> "Every one of Israel is told to consider himself to be standing at Mount Sinai to receive the Torah. For man there are past and future events, but not for God; day in, day out he gives the Torah."[1]
>
> The rabbi of Kobryn taught:
> God says to man, as he said to Moses: "Put off your shoes from thy feet"—put off the habitual which encloses your foot, and you will know that the place on which you are now standing is holy ground. For there is no rung of human life on which we cannot find the holiness of God everywhere and at all times.[2]

Tillich agrees with Buber in emphasizing continuity within the revelatory framework. Where others see separate types of revelation, general and special revelation, Buber sees the one type of experience - that can be the basis of a true revelation, namely, the "I-Thou" encounter, and Tillich calls this experience "receiving" knowledge. Tillich says that the distinction between general and special revelation has arisen because theologicans have mistakenly seen two different kinds of experience where there has actually been only one, the experience of revelation, but in one case the focus of the person is on the regular occurrences and in the other on irregular ones.[3] So too, Buber sees the great revelations of the Bible as continuous with the quiet ones of every day life. There are those who feel that this attitude involves a humanizing of revelation, that it is nothing more than a subtly expressed version of the "religious genius" theory of revelation. They would insist that only through biblical revelation can we know anything at all about God, that all other knowledge of God is derivative from this. We would not know God in the starry heavens

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[1] The Later Masters, p. 116. [2] Ibid., p. 170.

[3] Systematic Theology, pp. 119f.

above, or in the moral order below unless we already knew Him through the Bible as the God of the Fathers, or in Christian terms as the One incarnate in Jesus Christ.

Karl Barth is the outstanding contemporary exponent of this point of view. He says that:

> . . .in Jesus Christ, and in Him alone, there enters upon the stage of human life that which is really new, and that which is hitherto unknown, because veiled and hidden. Revelation is here something other than an exaggerated expression for the unexpected and astounding appearance and discovery of a best example in an otherwise familiar sequence of development.[1]

Therefore, there can be no knowledge of God which is not rooted in His self-disclosure in the person of Jesus Christ. It is also possible to emphasize the radical discontinuity between biblical and non-biblical revelation within the framework of Judaism, and this is done by Will Herberg, who says: ". . .though God is everywhere to be discerned in his person, activity and works, the mind of sinful man is incapable of finding him through its own unaided powers."[2]

This issue is one that arouses considerable discussion and debate in contemporary theology. To summarize, those who insist that biblical revelation is discontinuous with other forms of revelation, such as revelation through nature, claim that to blur this radical distinction is to reduce revelation to a human faculty which can operate on all forms of data and find evidence of God therein. Thinkers like Buber and Tillich, who stress the continuity between biblical and non-biblical revelation,

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[1] Aulén, Barth, Bulgakoff, et. al., trans. Rev. J. O. Cobham and R. J. C. Gutteridge, op. cit., p. 45.

[2] Will Herberg, Judaism and Modern Man, An Interpretation of Jewish Religion (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951), p. 255.

insist that those theologians who make them discontinuous compartmentalize biblical revelation and render it irrelevant to life.

This issue is often believed to represent a more radical divergence than really exists. In point of fact, both parties maintain that revelation is the self-disclosure of God and that man cannot apprehend it without divine aid. It is this latter factor—the need for God's help—which is crucial. We have already noted the fact that Buber regards the "I-Thou" encounter as one which involves both grace and freedom, so that God's aid is necessary if an "I-Thou" encounter between man and God is to take place. In similar fashion, we find that a thinker who emphasizes the discontinuity between biblical and non-biblical revelation must acknowledge the fact that divine intervention is necessary if man is to apprehend His self-disclosure in the Bible. Thus John Calvin declares that were it not for sin man could come to God through the creation which testifies to Him. However, he adds that man whose vision is distorted by sin needs biblical revelation to correct it. Then he says that for man truly to apprehend the biblical revelation, it is necessary that the Holy Spirit illumine the mind of the man who reads Scripture.[1]

Thus the key question is not whether biblical or special revelation is or is not continuous with non-biblical or general revelation, but rather that the key question is how men come to God. Whether it is the evidence of the Bible, of nature, or of moral order, it would appear that in the view of those who emphasize continuity

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[1]John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. John Allen, Vol. 1 (7th American ed.; Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1936), Bk. 1, chaps. iv, vi, vii.

between biblical and non-biblical revelation, as well as those who emphasize the radical discontinuity between them, the key factor is the indvidual's appropriation, through the aid of God, of the meaning of revelation. However, before turning to a consideration of the phenomenon of appropriation, we shall consider the strikingly similar views of miracle and theophany held by Buber and Tillich.

Buber's view of miracle and theophany.—There is no aspect of Buber's thought which reveals his attitude towards biblical revelation as clearly as does his view of the phenomena of miracle and theophany. In this context he explains his reasons for regarding biblical revelation as continuous with the "Thou" encounters of every day life. He must do this because it would seem that the fundamentalists are surely right in claiming that the Scriptures provide a great deal of evidence for the "supernatural" view of revelation. Surely the accounts of the Plagues in Egypt and of the Pillar of Fire which marched before the Israelites through the wilderness are evidence of a shattering of the causal nexus which we regard as determinative in nature. Yet Buber rejects all supernaturalism in his view of miracle. He has recorded a story about the Baal Shem Tov, "The Famous Miracle," which serves as a perfect introduction to Buber's own view of miracle.

> A naturalist came from a great distance to see the Baal Shem and said: "My investigations show that in the course of nature the Red Sea had to divide at the very hour the children of Israel passed through it. Now what about that famous miracle!" The Baal Shem answered: "Don't you know that God created nature? And he created it so, that at the hour the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea, it had to divide. That is the great and famous miracle!"[1]

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[1] The Early Masters, p. 71.

The view of miracle which Buber expresses in Moses serves as a commentary on this story.

> The concept of miracle which is permissible from the historical approach can be defined at its starting point as an abiding astonishment. The philosophizing and the religious person both wonder at the phenomenon, but the one neutralizes his wonder in ideal knowledge, while the other abides in that wonder; no knowledge, no cognition, can weaken his astonishment. Any causal explanation only deepens the wonder for him.[1]

What Buber says here about the religious person is certainly applicable to the response of the Baal Shem. However, Buber generalizes this interpretation of miracle so that is applies to non-biblical revelation as well, strengthening his emphasis on the continuity between what some theologians term special and general revelation.

> The great turning-points in religious history are based on the fact that again and ever again an individual and a group attached to him wonder and keep on wondering; at a natural phenomenon, at a historical event, or at both together; always at something which intervenes fatefully in the life of this individual and this group. . . .The extraordinary element favours this coming together but it is not characteristic of it; the normal and ordinary can also undergo a transfiguration into miracle in the light of the suitable hour.[2]

It is clear that this view of miracle is one which, as Buber says, must be adopted by those who take the historical approach seriously. A reading of Tillich's setting of the phenomenon in the context of his view of revelation, a view which insists that truths of revelation cannot contradict the truths of reason or override the structures of being, shows his fundamental agreement with Buber at this point. According to this view:

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[1]Martin Buber, Moses (Oxford: East & West Library, 1946), p. 75.

[2]Ibid., pp. 75f.

> Miracles are given only to those for whom they are sign-events, to those who receive them in faith. Jesus refuses to perform "objective" miracles. They are a contradiction in terms. . . . Scientific explanation and historical criticism protect revelation; they cannot dissolve it, for revelation belongs to a dimension of reality for which scientific and historical analysis are inadequate.[1]

It is hard to say whether Tillich, who has publically stated his great debt to Buber in his article on "Martin Buber and Christian Thought,"[2] has been influenced by Buber's treatment of miracle in Moses or not. The similarity is striking but it is likely that each developed his views independently. What is most significant is the striking unanimity revealed when we consider Buber's statement that the wonder of a miracle

> . . .cannot be explained away. Miracle is not something "supernatural" or "superhistorical", but an incident, an event which can be fully included in the objective, scientific nexus of nature and history; the vital meaning of which, however, for the person to whom it occurs, destroys the security of the whole nexus of knowledge for him, and explodes the fixity of the fields of experience named "Nature" and "History". Miracle is simply what happens; in so far as it meets people who are capable of receiving it, or prepared to receive it, as miracle.[3]

In order to appreciate Buber's view of the underlying significance of a miracle, we must turn to the words of a hasidic rabbi who said: "'Elijah's great work was not that he performed miracles, but that, when fire fell from Heaven, the people did not speak of miracles, but all cried: "The Lord is God."'"[4] So too Buber would call our attention to the fact that "the real miracle means that in the astonishing experience of the event the current

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[1] Tillich, Systematic Theology, p. 117.

[2] Op. cit., see especially, pp. 515f.

[3] Moses, p. 76.

[4] Buber, "The Great Work," The Early Masters, p. 93.

system of cause and effect becomes. . .transparent and permits a glimpse of the sphere in which a sole power, not restricted by any other, is at work."[1]

The key to Buber's understanding of miracle is found in his concern for relevance. If the Bible were simply a record of supernatural occurrences we might credit or discredit them, but in either case they would be irrelevant to our every day experience since we know of no such supernatural occurrences, and what is more the traditional view of revelation, which emphatically proclaims the supernatural as the crucial element in miracles, declares that they ceased to occur after biblical times. This view holds that God no longer speaks to men according to the manner in which he spoke to the prophets. Buber registers emphatic disagreement with this position. He declares that ". . .a faithful and unprepossessed reader of Scripture must endorse the view he has learnt from it: what happened once happens now and always, and the fact of its happening to us is a guarantee of its having happened."[2]

In dealing with theophanies Buber employs the same criterion. He describes Isaiah's Vision of Annunciation and reflects on this phenomenon. He reaches into his own experience and decides that Isaiah could not have seen the divine form on the throne. He says that:

> . . .when we are told in Biblical accounts of early experiences of God that He let Himself "be seen" by His believers. . .the word undeniably refers us to a specific kind of practical experience. . .we must ask what, more or less, can have been the nature of those experiences.[3]

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[1] Moses, p. 77.

[2] "Heaven and Earth," At the Turning, p. 49. (my underlining).

[3] Moses, pp. 116f.

And he decides, regarding the vision of Isaiah, that in seeing a radiance Isaiah felt himself to be seeing the Radiant One, in seeing a sitting on the throne he experienced the impact of the form of One sitting on the throne.[1]

In all this Buber emphasizes the existential character of revelation as involving mutual interaction between God and man, and he expresses his convictions that this form of the "I-Thou" relation is but a special case, albeit the most significant case, of the "I-Thou" encounter. If a modern man is to experience the revelatory power of these encounters, it is necessary that he appropriate them.

Appropriation

No objective proofs for truths of revelation.—The phenomenon of appropriation is best understood in the light of Kierkegaard's devasting attack on all attempts to demonstrate the truth of Christianity objectively. Kierkegaard felt that these attempts would render Christianity so plausible that no commitment of faith would be possible for the individual Christian, but rather he would simply assent to its truth as he would assent to the truth of the statement that two plus two equals four.

Kierkegaard found two main types of objective demonstrations being offered—those proposed from the historical and those proposed from the speculative points of view. Under the historical type he subsumed the attempts of biblical scholarship to demonstrate the historicity of the Scriptures, as well as the attempt to validate the faith in terms of the church, as guarantor

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[1] Ibid., p. 116.

of the continuity of a central core of Christian doctrine, and finally, the attempt to argue to the truth of Christianity from the eighteen (in Kierkegaard's day) centuries of its survival.

To the first argument, the one concerning the historicity of Scriptures as demonstrated by biblical scholarship, Kierkegaard has two answers. In the first place, a man who would stake his eternal happiness on the truths of Christian faith can not do so on the basis of the changing notions of historical probability that are found in the pages of the scholarly journals. Furthermore, even at the point of maximal certitude which, according to their own canons, the historical scholars attain they are still dealing with approximations, not with certainty.[1] The other point is that, in any case, the chief problems connected with the Christian faith are not to be resolved in terms of the historical accuracy of the New Testament accounts of the career of Jesus of Nazareth. Almost all contemporaries of Jesus, people who had all but total access to his historical circumstances, failed to recognize him as the God-man.[2] Therefore, faith must be recognized as something other than a conviction that the various stories of the Bible, especially of the Gospels, are on the whole historically reliable.

To shift the argument to the Church, as a present institution whose continued existence involves the preservation of a central core of Christian doctrine through the centuries, seems even more futile to Kierkegaard. In his view it would be a far more difficult task to document

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[1]Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, pp. 25-35.

[2]Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, pp. 47-51.

the essential integrity of the core of the Christian message through all the involutions of church history than it would be to establish the historicity of the Gospels. He declares that this presentness of the church, which seems to provide a basis for contemporaneity with essential Christian truth, is an illusion. "This discipline would have the task of proving the primitive character of the confession of faith, its identity of meaning everywhere and in every moment through eighteen centuries. . . and so again there will be a nosing about in ancient documents."[1] Finally, the eighteen centuries of Christian existence do not serve to demonstrate its truth. For the Christian would not accept this argument from duration as a proof for the truth of other faiths.[2]

Having demolished the pretensions of those who would demonstrate the objective truth of Christianity by means of historical proofs, Kierkegaard turns to speculative philosophy which, as he understands it, represents the philosopher's effort to divest himself of all individuality and to identify himself with universal reason. He is not concerned with his personal eternal happiness ". . .precisely because his task consists in getting more and more away from himself so as to become objective, thus vanishing from himself and becoming what might be called the contemplative energy of philosophy itself."[3] Kierkegaard uses the analogy of husband and wife to show that in contrast to speculative philosophy Christianity is only to be understood in terms of subjective interrelations. He insists that it is improper to speak of

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[1] Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 40.

[2] Ibid., pp. 45-47.

[3] Ibid., p. 54.

a marriage as a historical phenomenon; it is to be understood only in terms of the love which invests all the acts of its partners with symbolic significance. If marriage is viewed objectively, without the understanding of love, these acts are a deception, and Kierkegaard holds that the same is true of Christianity.[1]

He rejects objective reason as a method of bringing men to God. Objective reason, whether employed as a substitute for revelation or as a means of proving the truths of revelation, actually lessens the possibility of a man's coming into a true relation to God, because it attempts to determine God by means of human categories of reason. Kierkegaard summarizes this attitude by means of a rather caustic story. He says that this danger, namely, that of distancing man from God in the very effort of trying to bring him closer to God by means of objective reason

> . . .needs to be carefully noted, lest one experience in the world of the spirit what befell the traveler who asked if the road on which he was journeying went to London, and was told by the Englishman that it did; in spite of which he failed to reach London, because the Englishman had omitted to mention that he needed to turn about, since he was proceeding in the opposite direction.[2]

Because he insists that there can be no objective validation of the truth of Christianity, Kierkegaard presents his existential definition of truth as "An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness."[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 52.

[2] Philosophical Fragments, p. 52n.

[3] Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 182.

Such truth requires that man be confronted, in the totality of his being, with its possibility, and that he accept it, not on the basis of objective considerations which lead him to a quantitative approximation to its truth, but on the basis of decision, a qualitative "leap of faith." It is a qualitative distinction because it does not involve adding a few more arguments of the same objective type to produce a final tentative verification of the problem, and because it involves distinctions beyond the realm of finitude and temporality. It is a leap because the existing individual must make this most crucial decision in objective uncertainty. Buber clearly understands the character of passionate personal appropriation as it relates to religious truth for he says that "even when the individual calls an absolute criterion handed down by the religious tradition his own, it must be reforged in the fire of the truth of his personal essential relation to the Absolute if it is to win true validity."[1]

Thus Buber knows full well that faith offers no objective guarantees. He claims that there are only two basic types of faith, however varied their contents may be:

> Both can be understood from the simple data of our life: the one from the fact that I trust someone, without being able to offer sufficient reasons for my trust in him; the other from the fact that, likewise without being able to give sufficient reason, I acknowledge a thing to be true.[2]

The one whom the man of faith trusts is, of course, God, and man's relation to Him does not rest on reasons. To be sure, he can provide reasons when asked just why he trusts God, but these reasons always emerge after the relation of trust has already been established.

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[1] "Religion and Ethics," trans. Eugene Kamenka and Maurice S. Friedman, Eclipse of God, p. 129.

[2] Two Types of Faith, p. 7.

The lack of objective guarantees in the realm of faith points to the fact that men are able to deny God, or like the false prophets in the Old Testament, to speak falsely in His name. "Over against such confusion the true word is almost powerless, in no respect here appearing as endowed by the heavenly Lord with supernatural might. God does not corroborate it."[1] Thus men must come to faith without objective certainty, without proof from history, from objective reason or from supernatural intervention.

Original and dependent revelation.—We have seen that revelation involves relation. It is an interaction between God and man. The man is not passive; but, as Tillich puts it, "The sign-events in which the mystery of being gives itself consist in special constellations of elements of reality in correlation with special constellations of elements of the mind."[2]

In the relational situation of revelation there are two different kinds of happenings which Tillich calls "original" and "dependent" revelation. He speaks of an "original" revelation as one ". . .which occurs in a constellation that did not exist before."[3] This is obviously to be distinguished from those revelations in which an individual appropriates the message of an age old tradition. "While Peter encountered the man Jesus whom he called the Christ in an original revelatory ecstasy, following generations met the Jesus who had been received as the Christ by Peter and the other apostles."[4]

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[1] Buber, The Prophetic Faith, pp. 176f.

[2] Systematic Theology, p. 117.

[3] Ibid., p. 126.

[4] Ibid.

The generations which follow Peter are involved in "dependent" revelation. When a Christian recognizes Jesus as the Christ he appropriates the Christian revelation which was original with Peter; when a Jew recognizes the God of his fathers as King of the Universe, he appropriates the revelation which was original with Moses and the generation at Sinai.

To Kierkegaard we owe the recognition that the quality of faith required for "dependent" revelation is no different from that required for "original" revelation. He presents the issue as a distinction between the contemporary disciple, that is, one who lived at the time of Jesus in personal contact with him, and the disciples at second hand, which includes all those who come in succeeding generations and who must therefore rely upon accounts of Jesus recorded by the contemporary disciples. Since almost all of the contemporaries of Jesus failed to recognize him as the God-man, Kierkegaard feels that their situation was not essentially different from that of subsequent generations. They were called upon to make the same leap of faith in declaring that their relation to this given concrete person was the determining factor for their eternal happiness. It is this movement of faith which is essential. To be sure, the contemporaneity of the disciples at first hand with Christ himself is the occasion of their faith, but it is an accidental factor because they could have been like the overwhelming number of people in their day who were contemporaneous to him without recognizing him, and, in any case, their faith wavered at the crucifixion. On the other hand, this first generation, by means of the testimony they recorded, stand as the occasion for the faith of the succeeding generations, and here again, the essential thing is the movement of faith whereby these

later generations appropriate the truths of the revelation.[1]

Since the revelation at Sinai was the key event in Israel's original revelation, it is important to note that the Passover Haggadah, in which the communal record of the event is preserved, explicitly commends this process of appropriation to the faithful. Early in the recitation of the events of the Exodus, which constitute a large part of this work, the attitude of a wicked son is described. Such a son is scornful of the ceremonies and asks, "What is all this to you?" The father is instructed to answer that: "This I do because of what the Lord did for me when I went forth out of Egypt."

Buber is keenly aware of the existential significance of this self-interpretation of the Jewish tradition. He quotes a similar passage from the Passover Haggadah to the effect that "'we, all of us, have gone forth out of Egypt'."[2] He also sees the significance of Kierkegaard's view that generations subsequent to a great historical revelation perform the same movement of faith, the same act of existential appropriation as those contemporaneous with the event, in other words, that subsequent generations are not penalized because they are not contemporaneous with the event. Buber expresses this by saying that "the Jewish Bible is the historical document of a world swinging between creation and redemption, which, in the course of its history, experiences revelation, a revelation which I experience if I am there."[3]

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[1] Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, pp. 74-88 (especially p. 88).

[2] Quoted in "Why We Should Study Jewish Sources," trans. Olga Marx, Israel and the World, p. 148.

[3] "The Man of Today," ibid, p. 94.

Here again, we see that whatever philosophical and theological influences may have urged Buber towards his existential position, he himself claims to find the authority for his views on the crucial religious issues, such as appropriation, within the Jewish tradition itself.

Community as bearer of dependent revelation.—Kierkegaard considered the phenomenon of appropriation in terms of the isolated individual, in terms of "the Single One."[1] This is misleading, and, as we shall see in the following chapter, it is partly responsible for some of the radical differences in tone between Buber and Kierkegaard. At the moment, it is important that we examine the role of the community as the bearer of dependent revelation because it was his experience of community in this role, that determined the attitude toward community which Buber has expressed in his social philosophy.

The central importance of the community as the bearer of the tradition that must be existentially appropriated by the individual believer is well expressed by the Russian Orthodox theologian Sergius Bulgakoff:

> Revelation is an individual-catholic act, through which the isolated individual is included in the corporate life of the Church. Revelation does not begin with one separate man and end with him. Every man possesses it for himself, but not alone, or in isolation. . . .the entire life of the Church—whatever its expression—constitutes a continually extended revelation.[2]

Buber is concerned to make a similar point when he says that "what is decisive is that I relate myself to the divine as to Being which is over

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[1] Buber, Between Man and Man, translator's note (9), p. 207.

[2] Aulén, Barth, Bulgakoff, et. al., trans. Rev. Oliver F. Clarke and Xenia Braikevitch, op. cit., pp. 149f.

against me, though not over against me alone."[1] In Judaism, the sense of community, the corporate character of revelation has always been central. Buber views the Jewish people as a community based upon memory in a way that is different from the unifying memories of other communities, because for the Jewish people:

> . . .the characteristic potency of our Jewish collective memory is the very origin of our own characteristic history. For the core of this history does not consist of a sequence of objective events, but of a sequence of essential attitudes toward such events, and these attitudes are the product of collective memory.[2]

In other words, Israel as a people is constituted by an historical event whose revelatory significance must be existentially appropriated. Israel as a national religious unity is therefore even more essentially involved with the corporate sense than Bulgakoff's Church.

Buber's exposition of the great original revelation of Judaism, the saga of the Exodus from Egypt and the covenant at Sinai, shows that in his view the individual and the community were inextricably linked from the first. A brief statement by Tillich on original revelation may serve as an excellent introduction to Buber's treatment of this relation:

> Original revelation is given to a group through an individual. Revelation can be received originally only in the depth of a personal life, in its struggles, decisions, and self-surrender. No individual receives revelation for himself. He receives it for his group, and implicitly for all groups, for mankind as a whole.[3]

The first of these ideas of Tillich which Buber expresses in his treatment of Moses, is that original revelation is given to a group through

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[1] "Religion and Philosophy," Eclipse of God, p. 40.

[2] "Study Jewish Sources," Israel and the World, p. 147.

[3] Tillich, Systematic Theology, pp. 127f.

an individual. For Buber in speaking of the Sinai convenant refers to Moses as the mediator and says that "the revelation, the making of the covenant, the giving of the statutes was performed by the 'translating' utterance of a mortal man. . ."[1] Buber is in complete accord with Tillich's view that no individual receives revelation for himself. In fact, in the case of Moses, a new community is being established. Buber speaks of ". . . the theo-political idea of Moses; namely, his conception of the relation between YHVH and Israel, which could not be other than political in its realistic character, yet which starts from the God and not from the nation in the political indication of goal and way."[2]

Buber finds the clue to the content of this theo-political relation in the terms "kingdom of priests" and "holy nation" by which Israel is designated.[3] These indicate to Buber that God is visualized by the people as King, and that they are to be in the direct relation of servants to Him, dedicating themselves and all that they have to Him. Here, in the birth event of Israel as a people, Buber finds the heart of Israel's mission elaborated in unmistakeable terms. The covenant between Yaweh and Israel means that all of the existence of the people is to be hallowed.

> . . .the point at issue is the behaviour of the national body as such. Only when the nation with all its substance and all its functions, with legal forms and institutions, with the whole organization of its internal and external relationships, dedicates itself to YHVH as its Lord, as its melek, does it become His holy people; only then is it a holy people.[4]

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[1] The Prophetic Faith, p. 57.

[2] Moses, p. 101.

[3] Exod. 19:6.

[4] Buber, Moses, p. 107.

Buber interprets the Ten Commandments, which God reveals to the people in this birth event, as regulative rules of a community which is to be directly governed by God.[1]

Buber also agrees with Tillich's statement that the individual receives the message of revelation not merely for his group but for mankind as well. In the case of Moses' receiving of the revelation at Sinai, Buber sees the message as one which sets for mankind as a whole, the task of hallowing the creation. Israel's special role is to lead mankind to the fulfillment of this mission by actualizing the hallowing of all existence in the life of a concrete community.[2]

When we speak of the central role of the community in Buber's interpretation of Judaism, we must remember that he experienced this centrality in his life. His boyhood impressions of the hasidic communities were a crucial factor in the revitalization of his Jewish commitment as a young man. Here he found a genuine link between himself and others, after he had vainly striven to find such a link in purely universal terms without a concrete, national basis.[3] He had never lost the sense of communal vitality that is possible within Judaism. Again and again throughout his many years as a prophetic voice within the community he has insisted that nothing less than a community centered in God, which would hallow life by realizing justice on earth, could deserve the name of Israel.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 119-140 (especially 130f.).

[2] Buber, "Judaism and Civilization," At the Turning, pp. 13f.; this is also the central theme of the series of essays by Buber which have been published in the volume Israel and the World.

[3] Buber, "Mein Weg zum Chassidismus," Hinweise, pp. 186-189.

He has elaborated this view in terms of the relation between ideal "heavenly" embodiments of community and the attempts to establish the ideal on earth. In doing so, he broadens his understanding of Israel's heaven-sent mission and its relation to earthly reality into an understanding of what he considers an important aspect of philosophical anthropology.

> Man as he is. . .naturally resists the command which he, man, has either read from the universe or received directly from a power superior to him and to the universe. He wills and wills not to translate the heavenly truth into earthly reality. . . .it is precisely in this mute struggle of man with the spirit that the rise of a great civilization originates.[1]

It is far worse for man when he no longer experiences a cosmic command. An epoch in which men know no heavenly truth is called by Buber an epoch of homelessness in the history of the human spirit.[2] Unless men have a cosmic framework for their earthly strivings they are rootless and can form no genuine communities. It is in these terms that Buber describes the contemporary situation in which man in our homeless epoch vacillates between commitments to individualism and collectivism. Unless men once again stand in dialogic relation to a power superior to man and the universe, these two unsatisfactory alternatives will be the only ones possible.[3]

We have already observed that Buber sees the hasidic community as the embodiment of his communal ideal.[4] We also know that Buber sees Hasidism as a concentration of the elements to be found everywhere in

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[1] Buber, "Judaism and Civilization," At the Turning, p. 13.

[2] "What is Man?", Between Man and Man, p. 126; see also, I and Thou, p. 115.

[3] "What is Man?", Between Man and Man, p. 199-205

[4] "The Beginnings of Hasidism," Hasidism, pp. 3f.

Judaism.[1] It only remains to be added that the communal ideal expressed in Paths in Utopia is a generalization of the actual situation which Buber found in Hasidism.[2] It is, therefore, Buber's discovery of the essential task of Judaism, in the original revelatory event of Exodus-Sinai that forms the basis of those ideas of community which have proved so influential when expressed in the strikingly original language of his social philosophy.

A legend which he recounts in I and Thou succinctly expresses the special flavor of his sense of community:

> Once upon a time, tells the Brahmana of the hundred paths, gods and demons were at strife. The demons said: "To whom can we bring our offerings?" They set them all in their own mouths. But the gods set the gifts in one another's mouths. Then Prajapati, the primal spirit, gave himself to the gods.[3]

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[1] "The Faith of Judaism," Israel and the World, p. 13.

[2] Paths in Utopia, pp. 144f.

[3] Buber, I and Thou, p. 61.

CHAPTER V

PARADOX AND THE ETERNAL "THOU"

God as the Eternal "Thou"

According to Buber, the God disclosed to man in revelation is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not the God of the philosophers—nor of the theologians.[1] This God is the God revealed in the Bible, the God who delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt, the God who formed a covenant with the people, and the God who spoke to Israel through the Prophets. This God is the one rejected by philosophers as the product of man's anthropomorphic capacities.

Buber is well aware of this philosophical attitude and directs himself to answering Spinoza's formulation of it, because he regards Spinoza's work as ". . .the greatest anti-anthropomorphic effort ever essayed by the human spirit."[2] Spinoza's main effort was directed to a purification of God from the stain of being open to human address. A God who could be spoken to was not great enough for him. However, Buber claims that:

> Spinoza's fundamental mistake was that he imagined the teaching of Israel to mean that God is a person; and he turned against this as a lessening of the Godhead. But the truth of the teaching lies in its insistence that God is also a person; and that stands over against all impersonal, unapproachable "purity" on the part of God as a heightening of the Godhead.[3]

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[1] Buber, "The Question to the Single One," Between Man and Man, p. 57; see also, "The Love of God and the Idea of Deity," trans. I. M. Lask, Eclipse of God, pp. 67-69, 82-84.

[2] "Religion and Reality," trans. Norman Guterman, ibid., pp. 23f.

[3] "Spinoza," Hasidism, p. 97.

Since Buber claims that religion represents the covenant of the absolute with the concrete, he claims that it presupposes the existence of an unconditioned and unlimited Being who lets limited and conditioned beings exist outside Himself, and who even lets them enter into relation with Him.[1] In effect then, Buber declares that anthropomorphism is necessary and vital to genuine religion, it is necessary that religions speak of God in personal terms. But for this very reason Buber urges caution when we speak of God as personal:

> It is indeed legitimate to speak of the person of God within the religious relation and in its language; but in so doing we are making no statement about the Absolute which reduces it to the personal. We are rather saying that it enters into the relationship as the Absolute Person whom we call God.[2]

Relation is the key word here. We have seen that Buber regards the great revelations of the Bible as continuous with the quiet revelations which take place everywhere and at all times. Man's relation with God is a special case of his revelatory encounters with all of being. This is why Buber regards anthropomorphism as necessary to religion.

> Anthropomorphism always reflects our need to preserve the concrete quality evidenced in the encounter; yet even this need is not its true root: it is in the encounter itself that we are confronted with something compellingly anthropomorphic, something demanding reciprocity, a primary Thou.[3]

In his clearest exposition of his view of biblical anthropomorphism, Buber provides a criterion for testing its legitimacy: ". . .the anthropomorphic metaphor must preserve its character, it must not transgress the bounds of spirituality; it has to give people what they need but it must not effect the essence of God."[4]

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[1]"Religion and Ethics," Eclipse of God, p. 126.

[2]Ibid., p. 127.

[3]"Religion and Reality," ibid., p. 23.

[4]Buber, Moses, p. 194. (my underlining).

However helpful it may prove in dealing with biblical material, this pragmatic criterion is inconsistent with Buber's dialogic view of revelation. For the dialogic encounters cannot yield any "essence of God." Essence is surely an "I-It" term, representing a knowledge of God which can be affirmed apart from the full presentness of the encounter.

Thus, though Buber fails to employ criteria of verification as an intrinsic aspect of his dialogic thought, he nevertheless employs them, and does so in a way that is inconsistent with its major tenets. For these criteria have a way of entering thought schemes even when their use is foresworn. It is at this point that we can especially appreciate one of Paul Tillich's main contributions to the contemporary theological scene, namely, his insistence that one cannot avoid philosophical issues in the context of theology. He has shown us that a refusal to treat the philosophical implications of theological problems consciously and systematically does not mean that they are not dealt with—one necessarily deals with them—but one does so unconsciously and haphazardly.[1]

Anthropomorphism is, in Buber's view, the acknowledgement on the part of religion itself of its essentially dialogic character. And he says that this is true of all religions, since all revelation is dialogic, and since ". . .all religions necessarily appeal to some kind of revelation, whether through the medium of the spoken word, or of nature, or of the soul: there are only religions of revelation. . ."[2] Buber calls the "Thou" encountered in the reciprocity of revelation the eternal "Thou." At the very outset of I and Thou Buber makes the religious character of his dialogic philosophy explicit by quoting the following lines from Goethe:

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[1]Tillich, Systematic Theology, pp. 55f.

[2]I and Thou, pp. 112f.

So, waiting, I have won from you the end:
God's presence in each element.[1]

In the context of his philosophy of "I and Thou," Buber calls God the eternal "Thou," but he is most emphatic in rejecting the idea that any such term can be substituted for the word God. Tillich's account of his first meeting with Buber sheds some light on Buber's attitude toward such substitution. On the occasion of this encounter Tillich delivered an address on the principles of religious socialism to a group of representatives of church and labor who were seeking a basis of cooperation. Tillich writes that:

> In order to make myself understood to those unfamiliar with or opposed to religious terminology, I had tried with great care to avoid any of the traditional religious words like God, sin, salvation, Christ, etc. After I had finished, Martin Buber got up and challanged my paper, not with regard to its content but its language. He stated with great seriousness that certain words are not replaceable, that there are "Ur-Worte" (primary words) which no other, especially no philosophical terms can ever supersede.[2]

For Buber, God is the most fundamental of the "Ur-Worte."

There is a story told by Buber himself which sheds further light upon his attitude towards the word God. He tells of visiting the home of a great philosopher who chided him for using the word God, since the word had been so abused through the centuries that it was almost blasphemous to use it in referring to the highest. Buber's passionate answer is so powerful that it will be quoted at length.

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[1] Ibid., p. xiii.

[2] "Martin Buber and Christian Thought," op. cit., p. 515.

". . .it is the most heavy-laden of all human words. None has become so soiled, so mutilated. Just for this reason I may not abandon it. Generations of men have laid the burden of their anxious lives upon this word and weighted it to the ground; it lies in the dust and bears the whole burden. . . .Where might I find a word like it to describe the highest! If I took the purest, most sparkling concept from the inner treasure-chamber of the philosophers, I could only capture thereby an unbinding product of thought. I could not capture the presence of Him whom the generations of men have honored and degraded with their awesome living and dying. I do indeed mean Him whom the hell-tormented and heaven-storming generations of men mean. Certainly, they draw caricatures and write 'God' underneath; they murder one another and say 'in God's name'. . . .We must esteem those who interdict it [the use of the name of God] because they rebel against the injustice and wrong which are so readily referred to 'God' for authorization. But we may not give it up. . . .We cannot cleanse the word 'God' and we cannot make it whole; but, defiled and mutilated as it is, we can raise it from the ground and set it over an hour of great care."[1]

The Eternal "Thou" and the Heaviness of Meaning

In the final part of I and Thou Buber turns to an explicit elaboration of his views on God—the eternal "Thou"—and revelation. He begins his exposition with a statement of the relation between the "I-eternal Thou" encounter and all other "I-Thou" encounters, whatever the sphere in which they occur.

> The extended lines of relation meet in the eternal Thou.
> Every particular Thou is a glimpse through to the eternal Thou; by means of every particular Thou the primary word addresses the eternal Thou.[2]

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[1] "Report on Two Talks," trans. Maurice S. Friedman, Eclipse of God, pp. 17f.; see also, I and Thou, pp. 75f.

[2] Ibid., p. 75.

Since the "Thou" realm is the realm of meaning we see that the meaning of the encounter with the eternal "Thou" underlies all the meanings disclosed in other "I-Thou" encounters. Just as Plato used the analogy of the sun's relation to the process of vision to explain the relation between the form of the Good and the process of recognizing all other forms; so Buber might use this analogy to express the relation between the eternal "Thou" and the process of encountering all particular "Thous." The eternal "Thou" is both the consummate instance of a "Thou" encounter, and the power that enables all other "I-Thou" encounters to occur: ". . .the inborn Thou is realised in each relation and consummated in none. It is consummated only in the direct relation with the Thou that by its nature cannot become It."[1]

To illustrate this point, we may turn again to the field of music. A pianist, a good musician of professional caliber, when discussing his career, attested to the deep satisfactions it provides. He said that in moments of genuine encounter with the music he plays, meaning is present, bodied over against him; he knows that something more is involved in his life as a musician than the production of pleasing noises. In the rare and transient moments of the "Thou" encounters he knows that meaning is assured. However, he is not simply a musician, he is also a man. In those long time spans when he is not in the midst of a "Thou" encounter, his life often seems meaningless, and music itself seems a superfluous activity with which man could readily dispense. His dexterity at the keyboard seems unimportant, a rather childish accomplishment, and he feels that there must surely be more useful pursuits for a man.

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[1] Ibid.

In this context we see the sense in which the encounter with the eternal "Thou" embraces all others. For this musician finds that when, through the "I-Thou" encounters of music, of love, or of other aspects of life, he encounters the eternal "Thou," he knows that there is meaning and purpose in his life. At such times, the meaning he encounters is more than the specific meaning embodied in a given piece of music; it is the all-embracing meaning which gives purpose to life taken as a whole and set within the context of society and of the universe.

Buber describes three results of the encounter with the eternal "Thou." These, he says, are received in undivided form in the actual experience, but may be considered separately. First of all, "there is the whole fulness of real mutual action, of the being raised and bound up in relation. . ."[1] which does not, says Buber:

> . . .in any way lighten his life—it makes it heavier, but heavy with meaning. Secondly, there is the unexpressible confirmation of meaning. Meaning is assured. Nothing can any longer be meaningless. . . .Thirdly, this meaning is not that of "another life", but that of this life of ours, not one of a world "yonder" but that of this world of ours, and it desires its confirmation in this life and in relation with this world.[2]

In the encounter with the eternal "Thou," the musician is assured that his life has a meaning but this does not lighten his life, it charges him with the task of realizing this meaning in his life in this world. He cannot take any objectively transmissible knowledge from the encounter with

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[1] Ibid., p. 110.

[2] Ibid.

the eternal "Thou" any more than he can achieve an objectively transmissible interpretation of a Beethoven sonata. He can only confirm the meaning he has encountered by living his life with integrity. This means a ceaseless struggle to achieve technical mastery and interpretative honesty. Even if he achieves a great degree of integrity, he can only hope that some will hear and understand. There is no guarantee; in this life, and in this world, he is continually faced with the threat of meaninglessness in his relations with his art, with society, and with himself. That is why the meaning encountered does not lighten his life; it can become real only through his living out that charge which the encounter imposes upon him. More will be said about this "heaviness" of meaning in the discussion of "holy insecurity."

The Eternal "Thou" and Being-itself

We have seen that man's relation to man, and particularly the most intimate of relations, that between man and wife, is the paradigm of the "I-Thou" encounter. It is therefore clear that the symbol of the eternal "Thou" fully participates in the anthropomorphism that characterizes Buber's dialogic philosophy, which in turn reflects the anthropomorphism of biblical thought. Buber makes this explicit when he speaks of ". . .the simple experience of faith that speaking with God is toto genere different from 'speaking with oneself'; whereas, remarkably, it is not something toto genere

different from speaking with another human being."[1]

If the encounter with God is not altogether different from speaking with another man, it is nevertheless strikingly different, because in it all beings become symbolic of the being of God, all "Thous" become transparent and disclose the eternal "Thou." "The relation with man is the real simile of the relation with God; in it true address receives true response; except that in God's response everything, the universe, is made manifest as language."[2] Clearly then, there is something ultimate in the symbol of the eternal "Thou." We have already seen that the relation to it is the consummating relation—that it encompasses all other "Thou" relations within itself. Now Buber adds the idea that man's relation with man is "the real simile" of his relation with God. In other words, the term eternal "Thou" is, in his thought, the most accurate expression of the nature of man's relation to God, since it is the expression of this true simile. For this reason it will be useful to compare it to the ultimate term in Tillich's discussion of God, namely "being-itself":

> The statement that God is being-itself is a nonsymbolic statement. . . .
> However, after this has been said, nothing else can be said about God as God which is not symbolic. . . God as being-itself is the ground of the ontological structure of being without being subject to this structure himself. He <u>is</u> the structure; that is, he has the power of determining the structure of everything that has being.[3]

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[1] "The Question to the Single One," <u>Between Man and Man</u>, p. 50.

[2] Buber, <u>I and Thou</u>, p. 103.

[3] Tillich, <u>Systematic Theology</u>, pp. 238f.

There are two highly significant distinctions between Buber's use of the term the eternal "Thou" and Tillich's use of the term "being-itself." In the first instance, Buber does not make the eternal "Thou" a symbol for God as He is in Himself, because, to do so would involve his going beyond the limits of the dialogic situation. Man does not encounter God as He is in Himself, he encounters the eternal "Thou" and this term is therefore restricted to God in relation to man. Buber says that the man who loves God knows himself to be loved by:

> . . .that absolute personality we call God. Can this be taken to mean that God "is" a personality? The absolute character of His personality. . .prohibits any such statement. It only means that God loves as a personality and that He wishes to be loved like a personality.[1]

The other significant difference follows from this one. Tillich claims that "being-itself" may be affirmed of God nonsymbolically, though it is the only term that may so be affirmed. Buber on the other hand is clear that the eternal "Thou" is merely the most expressive symbol of man's relation to God. It points to the reality of the encounter wholly present, but in itself the term the eternal "Thou" is a symbol which necessarily belongs to the world of "It."

Tillich can speak of "being-itself" as nonsymbolic because this term is the "a priori" that is presupposed in every proposition about being which the mind of man can affirm.[2] No correspondence between thought and being would be possible, if God were not "being-itself." The eternal "Thou,"

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[1]"The Idea of Deity," Eclipse of God, p. 81; see also, "Religion and Ethics," ibid., p. 127.

[2]Systematic Theology, pp. 166-168.

on the other hand, is not an ontological term but a relational one. It is highly significant that Buber, in speaking of the sense in which man recognizes that the experience of speaking with God is not totally different from the experience of speaking with man, appeals to "the simple experience of faith." Here again is a category of existential immediacy. But, what was true of the other "I-Thou" encounters, is also true of the encounter with the eternal "Thou." Buber would not have the encounter subjectivized nor psychologized, he insists that the encounter has a genuine ontological character.

The Ontological Character of the Eternal "Thou"

Revelation involves an encounter with the eternal "Thou" and Buber makes the same ontological claims for it that he makes for the other encounters. Furthermore, the difficulties of substantiation which emerged in connection with his claims for the other encounters re-emerge here.

We have seen that the symbols which Buber employs to indicate the ontological basis for the dialogic encounters are over against and "between." He insists that the "other" is not a figment of the person's imagination; he is bodied over against him and the communication which takes place"between" them produces a meaning which transcends their subjectivity.

> . . .it is totally erroneous to wish to understand that which transpires "between" men as psychological. If two men carry on a [genuine] conversation. . . .its meaning is not to be discovered either in one of the two partners or in both taken together, but only in this their bodily working together, in this their "between."[1]

These symbols are very much in evidence in Buber's statements on God and revelation: ". . .God is the Being that is directly, most nearly, and lastingly, over against us, that may properly only be addressed not expressed."[2] We may recall Buber's statement that Israel's great contribution was not that it told man of the one true God, but rather that it taught men that they can address God, that they can say "Thou" to Him, "that there is communion between God and man."[3] One of the hasidic tales clearly expresses the overwhelming sense of God's ontological reality which Buber would convey by the term over against. It tells of the time one of the great Zaddikim known as the rav, asked a disciple to tell him what we mean when we say God. The answer was silence. It was repeated a second and a third time, until the zaddik asked him whey he was silent. He answered "'Because I do not know.'"

> "Do you think I know?" said the rav. "But I must say it, for it is so, and therefore I must say it: He is definitely there, and except for Him nothing is definitely there—and this is He."[4]

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[1] Buber, "Zwischenmenschlichen," dialogische Prinzip, p. 262. (my translation).

[2] I and Thou, pp. 80f. (my underlining).

[3] "Spinoza," Hasidism, p. 96. (my underlining).

[4] Buber, "Question and Answer," The Early Masters, p. 269.

Buber has continually rejected any position which would reduce the encounter between man and the God who stands over against him to some subjective event within man's psyche. He desires to go beyond subjectivity and objectivity in his understanding of revelation, just as he would go beyond it in his interpretation of all other "I-Thou" encounters. "Subjectivism empties God of soul, objectivism makes Him into an object—the latter is a false fixing down, the former a false setting free; both are diversions from the way of reality, both are attempts to replace reality."[1] That is why he rejects the pure objectivism of the "dictation" theory of revelation, and the pure subjectivism of the "religious genius" theory. Yet when we look to Buber's words for substantiation of his claim that God is not simply the product of some human faculty, we find assertion rather than cognitive argument. Here again the language is philosophical but the method is almost purely prophetic.

Buber presents the most comprehensive of his statements on the ontological implications of the encounter between God and man in an interchange with the psychologist C. G. Jung. He begins by explicitly stating that a phenomenon which many would classify as religious is in his view pseudoreligious if it does not ". . .bear witness to an essential personal relation to One who is experienced or believed in as being absolutely over against one."[2] In Buber's view, Jung regards many pseudoreligious phenomena as genuine because he does not, and cannot, recognize this distinction. It is a distinction which cannot be drawn within the limits of psychology anymore than ". . .sociology as Max Weber understood it enabled him to make a

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[1] I and Thou, pp. 118f.

[2] Buber, "Religion and Modern Thinking," Eclipse of God, p. 104.

distinction in kind between the charisma of Moses and that of Hitler. What Jung is to be criticized for," according to Buber, "is that he oversteps with sovereign license the boundaries of psychology at its most essential point."[1] Buber claims that Jung does this by reducing God to a content of the human psyche: ". . .he conceives of God not as a Being or Reality to which a psychical content corresponds, but rather as this content itself."[2]

We have seen that Buber is not one to minimize the psychical character of statements about God. His rejection of any theory that would ground the content of revelation exclusively in the divine, in the way that the "dictation" theory does, is ample evidence of this. No, Buber is quite willing to concede Jung's point that all statements about God are human statements and are part of the content of the psyche, but Buber adds:

> Not only statements about God, but all statements in general are "human." Yet is anything positive or negative thereby ascertained about their truth? The distinction which is here in question is not that between psychic and non-psychic statements, but that between psychic statements to which a superpsychic reality corresponds and psychic statements to which none corresponds.[3]

This is a valid point, and we might also concede the validity of the statement which follows it to the effect that "the science of psychology . . . .is not authorized to make such a distinction. . ."[4] However, this is only a beginning. So far we can only say that psychology has no right to reduce religious statements about reality to the level of psychic statements to which no superpsychic reality corresponds. But we must then turn to Buber

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., p. 106.

[3] Buber, "Reply to C. G. Jung," trans. Maurice S. Friedman, ibid., pp. 173f.

[4] Ibid., p. 174; for a similar discussion of the limitations of science, see also, "Zwischenmenschlichen," dialogische Prinzip, pp. 171-173.

for philosophical validation of his positive statement that there is a superpsychic reality to which these statements about God correspond. If Buber's appeal is merely to the "simple experience of faith" then the views of revelation which Buber expresses will be involved in the same existential predicament as his general statements about "I and Thou" encounters. Yet, as we shall see, he does not provide a basis for going beyond this appeal.

Buber's writings abound with statements in which he insists that the various "Thou" encounters are ontological in character, without providing any evidence that would verify his assertions. Thus speaking of the character of revelation he says that ". . .we, whose concern is real consideration of the real, cannot have our purpose served with subconsciousness or any other apparatus of the soul."[1] In another context Buber insists that ". . .the great images of God fashioned by mankind are born not of imagination but of real encounters with real divine power and glory."[2] Here again we have statements that claim ontological status for religious affirmations of God. However, these statements are inadequate ontologically because they can convince only those who are already included in that "we, whose concern is real consideration of the real"; they cannot convince the man who regards revelation as a purely subjective phenomenon—"an apparatus of the soul."

In reviewing the Eclipse of God, Arthur A. Cohen has clearly summarized one aspect of this problem. He says that Buber's answer to the predicament of modern man, who has lost his vision of the divine activity and

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[1] I and Thou, p. 109.

[2] "Religion and Reality," Eclipse of God, p. 22.

his orientation in the world, is the rediscovery of the power of encounter. Mr. Cohen is inclined to agree with this answer, but he adds that:

> . . .the precise problem is to render the immediacy of encounter communicable to others. Buber has not solved this problem, for his understanding of the encounter is always communicated in the language of encounter. Speaking thus, he can address only those who have already achieved the awareness he wishes to excite. He cannot open the heart that is closed, for his language has presupposed openness.[1]

There is another aspect of this problem, one we have already considered. If Buber is to speak in more comprehensible terms to those who have not found his dialogic language meaningful, he must do so at the price of using more objectifying "I-It" language which, in his view, must radically falsify the meaning of the encounter.

Once again, Tillich's procedure may serve as a contrast to Buber's. Both share the goal of mediating the revelatory truths of a pre-philosophical age to modern man who necessarily thinks in philosophical categories. But where Buber's powerful language would overwhelm the reader through assertions which point to the One God of Israel Who is beyond all that which can be said about Him, Tillich would argue in cognitive terms. As Tillich pursues his ontological effort, he examines the relation between thought and being at each stage of the argument, and he attempts to establish criteria which would enable him to move beyond the existential predicament.

Thus, when Tillich explicates the phenomenon of revelation as an instance of "receiving" knowledge, he has already established a mode of verification, experiential verification, which would test it. In moving to

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[1]Arthur A. Cohen, "Book Review of Eclipse of God by Martin Buber," Judaism, II (July, 1953), 282.

his discussion of God, he then established the one nonsymbolic statement that can be made about God, the ontological statement that God is "being-itself." In this way, Tillich would hope to show those who stand outside "the theological circle" that any assertions they make which claim to be true involves them in affirming that which the Christian tradition means by God. For, in this context, God is that power which establishes the structure of being, thereby making it possible for a true relation between thought and being to exist. Tillich then hopes, through his method of experiential verification, to validate the other statements about God, statements which are necessarily symbolic in character.

Buber never refers to himself as a theologian, he is generally considered a philosopher, yet, as indicated by the designation "Prophet in Philosophical Clothing," the character of his thought is very much akin to confessional theology which illumines the insights of a religious tradition for those who stand within it by beginning with the experience of faith and then expounding it verbally in a way that helps to clarify the meaning of the experience and to point the faithful back to the experience itself. It is the theology of relation or union rather than that of distance.

This is but one side of the task of theology, the other being the attempt to address the insights of a religious tradition to those who stand outside it and to defend its fundamental perspectives from the criticisms of those who stand at a distance. It is in the performance of this latter task that Buber is compared with Tillich throughout this work. For in this context prophetic declamation can not take the place of cognitive argument. We have seen that Buber's attempt to oppose the reductionist categories of C. G. Jung does not deal with the inadequacy of those categories but only reiterates Buber's conviction of their inadequacy. It is indeed ironical that Paul Tillich who is widely known as a theologian should attempt the apologetic task with a greater degree of methodological adequacy.

The comparisons between Buber and Tillich in this study leave the fundamental issue unresolved, namely the extent to which the apologetic task can be successfully accomplished. It may well be argued that in the end Professor Tillich's discussion of the element of participation in "receiving" knowledge, and especially of the "theological circle"—the concrete commitment which establishes the framework within which all theology, apologetic as well as confessional, must operate—involves him in the existential predicament that his theology attempts to transcend.[1] It may be that the limitations of human cognition render this predicament inescapable. However, Tillich's method attempts to move beyond it, he accepts the problematics of the situation and struggles with them, recognizing the fact that his own thought may, in the end, become an expression of the existential predicament. Yet Buber surely remains within it and his apologetics are weak. Furthermore, if one's evaluation of Tillich's enterprise involves a judgment that it is impossible of achievement by the nature of the case, or that it is possible of achievement but that Tillich's particular effort fails, it is well to remember that one distinguishing mark of a great thinker is the extent to which he is aware of and explores the ramifications of the problems posited by his own thinking.

While the limitations of the apologetic element in Buber's thought should not be overlooked, indeed they will be more fully examined in the course of this study, the confessional mode of address is much closer to the heart of his enterprise and here his greatness is almost without parallel in our time. A central purpose of this study is the attempt to communicate the existential power of his confessional utterance and to that end the intimate relation of his dialogic philosophy to the Jewish tradition, especially to Hasidism is being explored.

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[1] Tillich, Systematic Theology, pp. 8-11

Paradox Inheres in Relation

The Song of "You"

Where I wander—You!
Where I ponder—You!
Only You, You again, always You!
You! You! You!
When I am gladdened—You!
When I am saddened—You!
Only You, You again, always You!
You! You! You!
Sky is You! Earth is You!
You above! You Below!
In every trend, at every end,
Only You, You again, always You!
You! You! You![1]

The "You" of this song is the eternal "Thou,"—God, and the song well reflects Buber's conviction that all statements about Him are necessarily paradoxical:

> The primal event pointed out by the images of the Bible does not lie under the principle of contradiction: A and not-A are here strangely concerned with one another.[2]

God is real, but we cannot know Him except through His appearances. For this reason all words which refer to God involve distortion. Yet Buber claims that this limitation in man's knowledge of God is not to be regarded as meaning that God Himself is a product of man's subjective faculties. He cautions us against the error of Stirner, of whom he writes: "Ignorant of the reality whose appearance is appearance, he proves its nature to be appearance."[3] God is not "wholly other" because He is indeed related to His

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[1] Buber, The Early Masters, p. 212.

[2] "The Question to the Single One," Between Man and Man, p. 78.

[3] Ibid., p. 45.

appearances. ". . .the primal otherness of the other. . .even when the other is God, must not be confined to a 'wholly otherness.'"[1] In the revelatory encounter man knows that the eternal "Thou" over against him is the everlasting One, Creator of heaven and earth, but man cannot overcome the limits of his own finitude even in this encounter, so that his knowledge is confined to the appearances of God to which God's reality is nevertheless mysteriously related.

In his treatment of the role of paradox in relation to God, Buber is consistent, for he maintains that man cannot know God in Himself, he insists that it is not reality or God which is paradoxical, but rather, it is man's relation to God which must be expressed paradoxically: "Does the fact that God lets Himself be loved as absolute personality mean that God 'is' a personality," Buber asks. His answer is a most emphatic no—"the absolute character of His personality, that paradox or paradoxes, prohibits any such statement."[2] God is not a person in Himself, or if He is, man cannot know it: "It is, indeed, even permissible for the believer to believe that God became a person for love of him, because in our human mode of existence the only reciprocal relation with us that exists is a personal one."[3] The paradoxical character of religious affirmations are thus clearly grounded in the limitations of man's capacity for relation and not in the Godhead.

In his discussion of the paradox of immanence and transcendence, Buber describes the experiential basis which led to its being posited within Judaism. Namely, that pious Jews throughout the ages have experienced God as wholly raised above man and yet in immediate relation to man. Such Jews have used the term Fatherhood of God and Sonship of man on the basis of this

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[1] Ibid.

[2] "The Idea of Deity," Eclipse of God, p. 81. (my underlining).

[3] "Religion and Ethics, ibid., p. 127.

primordial experience, so that when they call God "Father":

> It is not as though these men did not know that God is also utterly distant; it is rather that they know at the same time that however far away God is, he is never unrelated to them, and that even the man who is farthest away from God cannot cut himself off from the mutual relationship.[1]

It is most interesting to note that when Buber validates the paradox in a philosophical context, by declaring that both terms are necessary, the one which points to God's distance and the one which points to His nearness, he again employs the pragmatic criterion which he used in his discussion of biblical anthropomorphism.

> An important philosopher of our day, Whitehead, asks how the Old Testament saying that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom is to be reconciled with the New Testament saying that God is love. Whitehead has not fully grasped the meaning of the word "beginning". He who begins with the love of God, without having previously experienced the fear of God, loves an idol which he himself has made, a god whom it is easy enough to love.[2]

The love of God is a symbol for His immanence, and the fear of God for His transcendent otherness.[3] Therefore, Buber insists that both terms of the paradox are necessary because a God of love alone would be an idol too close to men, too easily utilized by them to serve as an object of worship; while a God of fear alone would be too distant from man, too "wholly other" for man to relate to Him in worship.

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[1] Buber, "The Two Foci of the Jewish Soul," trans. Greta Hort, Israel and the World, p. 31.

[2] Buber, "Religion and Philosophy," Eclipse of God, p. 51.

[3] Buber, "The Two Foci," Israel and the World, pp. 31f.

"Of course God is the 'wholly Other'; but He is also the wholly Same, the wholly Present. Of course He is the Mysterium Tremendum that appears and overthrows; but He is also the mystery of the self-evident, nearer to me than my I."[1]

Buber regards paradox as necessary to religious communication because it is essentially involved in revelation: "The religious communication of a content of being takes place in paradox. It is not a demonstrable assertion . . .but a pointing toward the hidden realm of existence of the hearing man himself and that which is to be experienced there and there alone."[2] We have already shown that in Buber's view what is to be experienced in the hidden realm of existence of the hearing man himself is that which stands over against him, the eternal "Thou," and it is in no way to be confused with the experience of some aspect of the psyche of the hearing one, such as the unconscious or the like.

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[1] Buber, I and Thou, p. 79.

[2] Buber, "Religion and Philosophy," Eclipse of God, pp. 59f.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONTRADICTION OF GOD'S HIDING

The God Who Hides Himself

Buber's talk of God's transcendent otherness, His distance and remoteness from man, points the way to a consideration of the mystery of the hidden God. All theologians who deal with revelation must grapple with this mystery because it is a necessary concomitant of revelation. We have already considered Tillich's statement that "whatever is essentially mysterious cannot lose its mysteriousness even when it is revealed."[1] For, if it did lose it, it would not be essentially but only seemingly mysterious. So too, Buber says that men experience the "Fear of God" when existence becomes incomprehensible and they encounter its mystery. "This is not the relative mystery of that which is inaccessible only to the present state of human knowledge and is hence in principle discoverable. It is the essential mystery, the inscrutableness of which belongs to its very nature; it is the unknowable."[2] The mystery can never be eliminated even in the process of revelation. Buber says that the Hebrew Bible understands that " . . .the living God is not only a self-revealing but also a self-concealing God."[3] Here he

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[1] Systematic Theology, p. 109.

[2] Buber, "Religion and Philosophy," Eclipse of God, p. 50.

[3] "Religion and Modern Thinking," ibid., p. 89; see also, The Prophetic Faith, p. 177.

particularly refers to the cry of the second Isaiah: "Truly, thou art a God, who hidest thyself, O God of Israel the Savior."[1]

In his use of this concept, Buber is true to a major emphasis of his dialogic view of revelation, namely, that man does not know God in Himself, but only in His relation to man. For that reason Buber speaks of the God of Israel as One ". . .who is a self-revealing but not less a self-concealing (in no way, to be sure, as people are accustomed to say, a hidden) God."[2] He rejects the use of the term a hidden God because this term implies knowledge of God as He is in Himself, and not as He discloses Himself in His relation to man!

Since Buber insists that the concept of the self-revealing and self-concealing God is relational, it is important that we examine his views on the question of human responsibility within the revelatory situation. It involves the traditional theological issue of predestination, namely, the question of whether man's freedom is involved in the revelatory situation, or whether God's self-disclosure to the man of faith is simply a matter of His "being merciful to those unto whom He is merciful," so that man has no freedom at all in this situation. Buber's thought on this issue is not consistent. Some of his utterances are in keeping with his dialogic thought and are paradoxical in character; others are voluntaristic in their implications, and false to the central emphases of his dialogic thought.

The eclipse of God is the main theme of a series of lectures Buber delivered in this country,and it deals with the absence of God's Word, with the absence of the revelatory encounter, as an affliction of our age.

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[1]Isa. 45:15.

[2]"Religion and Ethics," Eclipse of God, p. 139.

> Eclipse of the light of heaven, eclipse of God—such indeed is the character of the historic hour through which the world is passing. But it is not a process which can be adequately accounted for by instancing the changes that have taken place in man's spirit.[1]

Here Buber is again insisting upon the ontological character of the revelatory encounter. The revelatory encounter must not be subjectivized ". . .if God is silent toward him [man] and he toward God, then something has taken place, not in human subjectivity but in Being itself."[2]

While the eclipse of God is not to be understood as taking place within man alone, neither is it something that takes place in God's being alone. For by the term eclipse of God he means to suggest that just as "an eclipse of the sun is something that occurs between the sun and our eyes, not in the sun itself," so too the eclipse of God occurs between God and man, not in God's being alone.[3] Therefore, when he says that man must not respond to this situation with sensational sayings about the "death" of God, but rather that it would be worthier for man to endure it, ". . .and at the same time to move existentially toward a new happening, toward that event in which the word between heaven and earth will again be heard,"[4] he is true to his dialogic insight that the relation with a "Thou" involves choosing and being chosen, suffering and action in one.[5] He points

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[1] "Religion and Reality," ibid., p. 34.

[2] "Religion and Modern Thinking," ibid., p. 91.

[3] "Religion and Reality," ibid., p. 34.

[4] "Religion and Modern Thinking," ibid., p. 91.

[5] I and Thou, p. 11.

to this same insight when he rejects the notion that the cessation of the dialogic relation between God and man can be overcome from man's side alone.

> But when. . .something [the eclipse of God] is taking place between heaven and earth, one misses everything when one insists on discovering within earthly thought the power that unveils the mystery. He who refuses to submit himself to the effective reality of the transcendence as such. . . contributes to the human responsibility for the eclipse.[1]

In these statements it is clear that Buber expresses the tension which arises from the fact that man is responsible for the eclipse of God because he is a partner to the relation, and yet is not solely responsible because he is only a partner; the eternal "Thou" is bodied over against him.

In other contexts, Buber is inconsistent with this position, for he implies that man is in fact solely responsible for the eclipse of God since "the eternal Thou can by its nature not become It. . . .And yet in accordance with our nature we are continually making the eternal Thou into an It, into some thing—making God into a thing."[2]

We may see the significance of this statement for Buber's view of revelation when he says that "the waves of the aether roar on always, but for most of the time we have turned off our receivers."[3] When Buber speaks of turning off our receivers, or of our making God into some thing, he certainly seems to contrast the inconstancy of the human will with the constant faithfulness of the divine purpose, so that man alone becomes responsible for the absence of the revelatory encounter.

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[1] "Religion and Reality," Eclipse of God, pp. 34f.

[2] I and Thou, p. 112.

[3] "Dialogue," Between Man and Man, p. 11; see also, "The Education of Character," ibid., p. 117.

In Christian terms, this view is known as semi-Pelagianism. It claims to settle the problem of the relation between God's grace and man's freedom in the revelatory situation. It clearly sees that the idea of God's hiding Himself is inconsistent with the notion that God is a God of love. Therefore, it declares that God continually offers men His revelation. Since it must confront the fact that some men believe and others do not, it attributes these differences to man's freedom to accept or to reject God's revelation. William Temple has effectively refuted this resolution of the problem. He reports a semi-Pelagian theologian as saying: "'No doubt the call is from God, so the initiative is with Him; but whether or not I answer the call depends on myself.'" Temple then reports the answer of the other theologian, an Augustinian: "'I see; so your address to the Almighty is: "For that thou didst call me of thy grace I thank thee; but for that I answered the call I thank thee not, but rather tender my most respectful congratulations."'"[1] Semi-Pelagianism, which Buber seems to espouse on occasion, is but a subtle form of voluntarism which does not do justice to mystery of revelation.

John Dillenberger rightly claims that we are confronted with the unfathomable nature of God whenever we try to discover the reason that one person can become a believer while another cannot.[2] This problem, he says, becomes most acute when we consider the case of a man who desperately seeks faith but cannot find it.[3]

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[1]William Temple, Nature, Man and God (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1934), p. 400n.

[2]John Dillenberger, God Hidden and Revealed (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1953), p. xv.

[3]Ibid., pp. 168f.

The semi-Pelagian view invariably involves us in moralistic judgments about the obdurate heart of this man which shuts out the revelatory word that God so graciously offers. Yet, in the Augustinian view we cannot attribute the failure of such a one to his sin, for, ironically enough, men like Saint Paul and Saint Augustine have confessed that God's merciful word of love came to them while they were yet sinners.

Of course, many Christian theologians who see the danger of making moralistic judgments about men who lack faith nevertheless talk of sin as the factor which prevents man from receiving God's revelation, but the sin which, according to their view, prevents this is original sin. Thus, Bulgakoff declares that ". . .after the Fall the image of God in man was obscured, man began to resist revelation and hid from God, thus all the human side of the divine-human process of revelation becomes burdensome and difficult."[1] In his Philosophical Fragments, Kierkegaard expounds the view that it is the fundamental error of man, his sin, which prevents his standing in proper relation to God, and that without God's revelation man would not even be aware of his sinful state.[2]

Here we move to the opposite extreme from the Pelagian view, since theologians who speak of original sin run the risk of making man's sinfulness a concomitant of his finitude so that the element of human responsibility in the revelatory encounter is utterly dissipated. Buber correctly sees this danger as one to which the Pauline strand in Christian thought is prone.

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[1]Aulén, Barth, Bulgakoff, et. al., op. cit., p. 141.

[2]Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, pp. 9-14, 37.

He writes that ". . .the tendency from Augustine to the Reformation was to see faith as the gift of God."[1] In Pauline thought, faith must be the gift of God because original sin renders man unable to turn to God of his own free will. In opposition to this Buber writes that:

> The "Fall" did not happen once and for all and become an inevitable fate, but it continually happens here and now in all its reality. In spite of all past history, in spite of all his inheritance, every man stands in the naked situation of Adam: to each, the decision is given.[2]

Where Pauline thought goes to an extreme which would deny man's responsible role in the revelatory encounter, Buber's criticism of it is justified. A view which would make man a purely passive recipient of divine grace, would simply be another form, however subtly expressed, of the "dictation" theory. To such overstatements Buber's most voluntaristic statements may serve as a corrective by overstating the opposite view. Yet when Buber is true to the paradoxical emphasis of his own dialogic philosophy, he is also true to the best insights of Pauline thought, although he tends to approach the paradox from the side of man's freedom where Paulinism tends to approach it from the side of God's grace. The following statement by Karl Barth well illustrates the Pauline position:

> Why is it I believe? Certainly I believe of my own free choice and decision. . . .I am no machine when I believe, but just as certainly I can in so doing apprehend myself only as one who, before he makes his choice is chosen, and as one upon whom, before he himself has decided, a decision has descended.[3]

So too Buber, when he is true to the paradoxical implications of his dialogic

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[1] "Religion and Ethics," Eclipse of God, p. 140.

[2] "The Faith of Judaism," Israel and the World, p. 17.

[3] Aulén, Barth, Bulgakoff, et. al., op. cit., p. 60.

thought:

> It is only when reality is turned into logic, and A and non-A dare no longer dwell together, that we get determinism and indeterminism, a doctrine of predestination and a doctrine of freedom, each excluding the other. According to the logical conception of truth only one of two contraries can be true, but in the reality of life as one lives it they are inseparable. The person who makes a decision knows that his deciding is no self-delusion; the person who has acted knows that he was and is in the hand of God. The unity of the contraries is the mystery at the innermost core of the dialogue.[1]

Were Buber more conscious of the fact that he does employ criteria in his dialogic thought, despite his strictures against them, he might apply them more consistently. He would, presumably, maintain his paradoxical position on the relation of grace and freedom in the context of revelation and not make statements which imply that man's freedom is the decisive factor, and that God's grace is not an essential part of the mystery.

Although his failure to be more precise in establishing and applying criteria provides the occasion for inconsistencies, the impetus towards this voluntaristic inconsistency arises from his prophetic role. In urging men to turn to God he naturally tends to overemphasize man's freedom. In his ethical thinking, which will be considered in a later section of this work, we shall see that this tendency is even more pronounced.

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[1]"The Faith of Judaism," Israel and the World, p. 17; see also, I and Thou, pp. 95f.

The Contradiction as Theophany

From the fact that it is man's melancholy fate that every "Thou" becomes an "It," it follows that God is not continually present to man, that men make God into a thing, that ". . .no man is able to be continually turned to the presence of God. . ."[1] Yet, there is an even greater test that the man of faith encounters; there are even more grievous hours than those in which God is not dialogically present to the man of faith; there are hours in which evil is so rampant that the man of faith is driven to deny the very possibility of the existence of the God of justice and love.

The evil rampant in nature and history has periodically driven men into a dualism which severs God as the creator from God as the redeemer. Thus, Buber describes the Christian heretic Marcion as one who tried to banish creation from religious reality. Buber claims that Marcionites in all periods of history regard the world-affirming attitude of Judaism as proof that Judaism fails to experience the "tragedy" in the world process. Buber answers that the world-affirming faith of Judaism has not been saved by the fact that Judaism has failed to experience the "tragedy," the contradiction in the world process, deeply enough, but rather it has been saved by the fact that ". . .it experienced that 'tragedy' in the dialogical situation, which means that it experienced <u>the contradiction as theophany</u>."[2]

Buber wrote these words in 1928. A few years later he was a party to the greatest test his words could receive, for he had to live as a Jew

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[1]Buber, "Right and Wrong," <u>Good and Evil</u>, p. 42.

[2]"The Faith of Judaism", <u>Israel and the World</u>, p. 26.

in Hitler's Germany. To live through such an era without losing faith in the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob, was certainly to experience "the contradiction as theophany."

Buber stood this test and he stood it by bearing prophetic witness to the God of his fathers in the midst of the historical situation. In many of the words which he spoke and wrote between 1933 and 1935, Buber shows how deeply he experienced the contradiction of the historical process. He wrote with intense pain of the situation that Jewish children encountered in the first years of the Nazi rule. Their friends, schoolmates, and teachers suddenly changed in their behavior towards them, and the symbol of this change was the shift from the friendly smile to the mocking leer.[1] But, for Buber, this trial while agonizing was not shattering, because he regards historical trials of this kind as part of Israel's destiny. Therefore, he reminded the Jews of Germany again and again of the resources of their faith, he reminded them that "to Israel belongs the grace to ever renew the primordial bond [the covenant with God] by which it first came into being, in just such distress."[2] He addressed himself to the German Jews and said that if they would only surrender the illusions of false freedom and security to which they had clung in recent times; if they would give these up and turn instead to God and the true freedom of being bound to Him, ". . .this staggering through the dark gorge would be manifest as our way into the light."[3]

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[1]Buber, "Die Kinder," Die Stunde und die Erkenntnis, pp. 18f.

[2]Ibid., p. 20. (my translation).

[3]"Das Erste," Ibid., p. 17. (my translation).

When a friend of his, a Protestant theologian, wrote him that "this time of wandering in the wilderness which has now begun for you [The Jews of Germany] can also become a time of great revelation. May God grant it," Buber answered: "May God grant it."[1] To experience "the contradiction as theophany," is the test of the vitality of faith. Only the strongest faith can maintain itself in the face of "the contradiction."

This approach to faith is not uniquely Jewish. Barth presents a similar view and illustrates it by means of Luther's powerful sermon on the encounter between Jesus and the woman of Canaan which is described in the gospel of Matthew.[2]

Of course Barth does not refer to this type of faith in terms of seeing "the contradiction as theophany," but instead he calls it a seeing of God's unveiling in His veiling. In his encounter with the Canaanite woman, Jesus continually rebuffs her although she declares her faith in him. First she acknowledges him as Messiah, and asks for mercy upon her daughter who is possessed by a demon, but Christ is silent. Then Jesus tries to send her away by saying that he is sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but she replies by kneeling before him and begging again for help. This time his refusal is more severe and he tells her that it is not right to throw the children's bread to the dogs. She does not flinch at this rebuke but, acknowledging herself to be a dog, she begs for crumbs from the children's table. Thereupon the mercy of God which had been veiled throughout the encounter is unveiled. As a confessing sinner

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[1] "Die Kinder," Ibid., p. 18. (my translation).

[2] 15:21-28.

(so Luther interprets her willingness to be called a dog) she has become a child of God, one of the true Israelites to whom His mercy is revealed.[1]

Buber too sees that man's confession of his sin is the first step (viewed from the human side) on the road to God; in the case of German Jewry, to a renewal of their primordial relation with God. In 1933, when their time of trial had begun, Buber chose the period of the High Holy Days, holidays whose liturgy contains a corporate confession of sin, to remind the German Jews that they must not look outward and declare that they are less sinful than the Germans. He insists that they look inward and consider the words of the confession of sin in the liturgy and then consider the tepid quality of Jewish existence, the greed and empty cleverness that characterizes Jewish life and doing this, they must realize that "no one is free of guilt, no one may exclude himself from it."[2]

By retaining a vital faith in the God of his fathers in the midst of this historical trial, Buber witnessed fully to the power of this faith, to the power of Judaism to see "the contradiction as theophany." Only a man with Buber's sense of "the prophetic faith" could have urged the people to confess their sins at a time like that, a time when most religious leaders compare the virtues of their own people to the sins of their oppressors, and therefore indulge themselves in endless cries of self-pity and self-justification. Buber insists that self-justification is the wrong response.

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[1]Karl Barth, The Doctrine of the Word of God, trans. G. T. Thomson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), pp. 202f., quoted in Dillenberger, op. cit., pp. 124f.

[2]Buber, "Gericht und Erneuerung," Die Stunde, p. 25. (my translation).

He says that the Jews of Germany can neither control the Germans nor the broader aspects of the historical situation, rather, they must continue to engage in confession and self-criticism and the attempt to establish a genuine community among themselves. They are like the farmer who is in the midst of a drought. He cannot control the weather but that is no reason for him to cease looking after his fields. He must properly perform those functions which he can control and leave the weather to God, then if the rain comes, the fields will be ready.[1] In the greatest hour of Israel's trial Buber's was a noble prophetic voice.

The hasidic tradition provided Buber with insights which helped him to see "the contradiction as theophany." One hasidic master spoke of the following incident:

> ". . .I complained to my teacher that in adversity it is very difficult to retain perfect faith in the belief that God provides for every human being. It actually seems as if God were hiding his face from such an unhappy being. What shall he do to strengthen his faith?"
> "The rabbi replied: 'It ceases to be a hiding if you know it is a hiding.'"[2]

Throughout the years of the Nazi persecution Buber experienced the situation as a hiding of God, he experienced "the contradiction as theophany." Therefore, years later, when addressing an audience of American Jews he could relate Judaism's trial under the Nazis to the book of Job. As Job, in anguish, demanded to know why he as one who is innocent suffers, so contemporary Judaism must ask why six million Jews who were

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[1]"Erkenntnis tut not," Ibid., pp. 59f.

[2]Buber, "Hiding," The Early Masters, p. 122.

certainly far more innocent than their Nazi oppressors were destroyed. Buber says that God did not answer Job's question but that "the true answer that Job receives is God's appearance only, only this that distance turns into nearness. . . .that man again hears God's address."[1]

This existential resolution of Job's situation, a resolution which in Buber's view leaves the theoretical problem of innocent suffering unanswered, provides Buber with the clue to the situation of contemporary Judaism. His first words in applying the lesson of the book of Job to this situation are a ringing challenge.

> And we?
> We—by that is meant all those who have not got over what has happened and will not get over it. How is it with us? Do we stand overcome before the hidden face of God as the tragic hero of the Greeks before faceless fate?[2]

Of course, the answer is no. And when Buber elaborates it he presents a reaffirmation of Israel's ancient mission. By seeing "the contradiction as theophany" Israel will not shrink from the world, the world in which it has just suffered in such an unprecedented way, but it will renew its mission—it will again seek to hallow the creation.

> . . .even now we contend, we too, with God, even with Him, the Lord of Being, Whom we once, we here, chose for our Lord. We do not put up with earthly being, we struggle for its redemption, and struggling we appeal to the help of our Lord, Who is again and still a hiding one.[3]

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[1] "Heaven and Earth," At the Turning, pp. 61f.

[2] Ibid., p. 62.

[3] Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

HOLY INSECURITY

The Dialogic Man of Faith

Passion without dogmatism.—Buber's existential view of revelation has clear cut implications for the life of the man of faith. One of these is that the man who perceives the truths of revelation dialogically will hold them passionately but not dogmatically. His confessional words regarding his own belief in revelation serve as the best introduction to his description of the dialogic man of faith.

> . . .my own belief in revelation, which is not to be mixed up with any "orthodoxy," does not mean that I believe that finished statements about God were handed down from heaven to earth. Rather it means that the human substance is melted by the spiritual fire which visits it, and there now breaks forth from it a word, a statement, which is human in its meaning and form, human conception and human speech, and yet witnesses to Him who stimulated it and to His will.[1]

The melting of the human substance by the spiritual fire that visits it involves, for an Existentialist such as Buber, far more than a thinking about these truths—it involves living them in the fulness of man's personal existence. "There is need of man's faith in the truth as that which is independent of him, which he cannot acquire for himself, but with which he

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[1]Buber, "Reply to C. G. Jung," Eclipse of God, p. 173.

can enter into a real relation of his very life. . ."[1] The way in which truth must be lived rather than thought or taught, is reflected in the words of a disciple of one of the great hasidic masters, the maggid of Mezritch who said: "'I did not go to the maggid in order to hear Torah from him, but to see how he unlaces his felt shoes and laces them up again.'"[2] It is in terms of the impact of such men that Buber speaks of the central figures in the history of religion who have done their work by living a certain way. They do not start from a teaching but live towards it, and their disciples provide their lives with a theological commentary which constitutes this teaching.[3]

Since the life of the dialogic man of faith is an integral part of the truth which he affirms, we find Buber dealing with the "how" as well as with the "what" of faith—with the manner as well as the content of the affirmation. Kierkegaard sets the issue before us by comparing a Christian who worships falsely with the true conception of God in his knowledge to the man who prays truly with the entire passion of the infinite, though he lives in an idolotrous community and so worships an idol. Kierkegaard then evaluates the situation by saying: ". . .where is there most truth? The one prays in truth to God though he worships an idol; the other prays falsely to the true God, and hence worships in fact an idol."[4] Buber's resolution of this dilemma is to insist that in the evaluation of religious truth both the content

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[1]Buber, "The Question to the Single One," Between Man and Man, p. 82.

[2]Buber, "To Say Torah and To Be Torah," The Early Masters, p. 107.

[3]Buber, "The Beginnings of Hasidism," Hasidism, p. 2.

[4]Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 180.

and the attitude of the man of faith must be taken into account—they cannot be separated even for the sake of argument. He speaks of a modern philosopher who supposes that man either believes in an idol or in the true God; that is, in some finite good that he has absolutized, or in the one and only true absolute, in God. Therefore, this philosopher imagines that all one has to do to make a man realize the true God is to demonstrate the finite and relative nature of the good which he has absolutized. Buber demurs because there is, he insists, a different quality to a man's true relation to the true God, to the eternal "Thou." For, in Buber's view, the relation to an idol must be marked by utilization, the chief characteristic of the "I-It" realm, whereas a relation to the true God can only properly be an "I-Thou" relation.

> He who is dominated by the idol that he wishes to win, to hold, and to keep—possessed by a desire for possession—has no way to God but that of reversal, which is a change not only of goal but also of the nature of his movement. . . . .Can the servant of Mammon say Thou to his money? And how is he to behave towards God when he does not understand how to say Thou? He cannot serve two masters—not even one after the other; He must first learn to serve in a different way.[1]

Tradition without imitation.—The dialogic believer cannot content himself with passive assent to traditional formulations of revealed truths. "Real faith does not mean professing what we hold true in a ready-made formula. On the contrary: it means holding ourselves open to the unconditional mystery which we encounter in every sphere of our life and which cannot be comprised

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[1] I and Thou, pp. 105f.

in any formula."[1] This openness precludes the possibility of imitation being a valid expression of dependent revelation. Each generation and each individual must respond to the tradition with fulness of being. Buber's spirit is completely opposed to the tendency to make religion a matter of "five simple rules" after the fashion of "positive thinking." This attitude is succinctly expressed in the following hasidic tale:

> When Rabbi Noah, Rabbi Mordecai's son assumed the succession after his father's death, his disciples noticed that there were a number of ways in which he conducted himself differently from his father and asked him about this.
> "I do just as my father did," he replied. "He did not imitate, and I do not imitate."[2]

What is involved here is Buber's interpretation of religion as a process which allows for, indeed demands, openness, as opposed to any interpretation which regards religion as a spiritual straight jacket which serves to coerce each new generation.

> For tradition does not consist in letting contents and forms pass on, finished and inflexible, from generation to generation. The values live on in the host who receives them by becoming part of his very flesh, for they choose and assume his body as the new form which suits the function of the new generation. . . .a generation can only receive the teachings in the sense that it renews them.[3]

The Baal Shem Tov put the matter very clearly when he interpreted the fact that in the first of the eighteen benedictions which the orthodox Jew repeats

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[1]Buber, "The Prejudices of Youth," Israel and the World, p. 49.

[2]Buber, "In His Father's Footsteps," The Later Masters, p. 157.

[3]Buber, "Teaching and Deed," trans. Olga Marx, Israel and the World, p. 139.

three times a day he recites:

> . . .'God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob,' and not: 'God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,' for Isaac and Jacob did not base their work on the searching and service of Abraham; they themselves searched for the unity of the Maker and his service."[1]

Buber's treatment of the different biblical designations for the God of the Patriarchs, Shield of Abraham, Fear of Isaac, Paladin of Jacob, is almost identical in spirit to these words of the founder of Hasidism. Buber insists that it would be wrong to conclude that three different gods are meant by these different designations:

> He who receives a tradition from the father or the inaugurator regarding the latter's God will certainly identify the God who appears to himself with the God of that tradition; yet at the same time he will give expression to the fact of his own immediate and personal relationship. . .by employing some fresh appellative.[2]

Here we have yet another example of Buber's grounding his existential interpretation of a phenomenon, in this case the phenomenon of religious tradition, in the Bible, and particularly, in the Bible as interpreted by Hasidism.

This openness toward tradition in no way means that Buber takes the tradition and the words in which it is formulated lightly. On the contrary, he regards these words with the deepest seriousness, and this was precisely the point of his criticism of Tillich's attempt to substitute other terms for the traditional religious ones, that criticism which he expressed by saying that there are certain "Ur-Worte." As we have observed, he rejects as theological arrogance all attempts to substitute those words which seek to interpret tradi-

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[1] Buber, "Themselves," The Early Masters, p. 48.

[2] Moses, p. 174.

tional symbols for the symbols themselves. A hasidic rabbi expressed this attitude by saying:

> "When you utter a word before God, then enter into that word with every one of your limbs."
> One of his listeners asked: "How can a big human being possibly enter into a little word?"
> "Anyone who thinks himself bigger than the word," said the zaddik, "is not the kind of person we are talking about."[1]

Against false security.—Since it is "the exalted melancholy of man's fate that every Thou becomes an It," no man of faith can rest in his achievement of appropriation; it is rather a continual process. When Kierkegaard speaks of the assurance of eternal happiness which the believer receives, he says that "it should be noted that this assurance is the sort of assurance that can be had in faith, i.e. not an assurance once for all, but a daily acquisition of the sure spirit of faith through the infinite personal passionate interest."[2] Men invariably seek to avoid the effort of the daily acquisition of faith. They seek to fix God once and for all in a reliable pattern that can be encountered as an "It," or as Buber puts it, they seek to transform the presence and power received in revelation into a content.[3]

Men try to transform the presence into a content because their drive for security impels them to seek to possess God. They are not satisfied with the inexpressible confirmation of meaning that comes in the full presentness of the encounter, but try to convert it into something that can be taken up and handled; they try to set it up as an unbroken continuum of meaning which insures life throughout its duration.[4]

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[1] Buber, "Into the Word," The Later Masters, p. 169.

[2] Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 53.

[3] I and Thou, pp. 112f. [4] Ibid., p. 113.

This psychic drive towards security which is found in every individual results in a group tendency to replace God as the eternal "Thou" of the revelatory encounter, with the object of a cult. At first a cult may know God in relation, but soon it sets up fixed and ordered devotions and sacraments which guarantee a fixed response from God.[1] As vital religion atrophies into a cult men find it increasingly difficult to say "Thou" with their whole undivided being. For, in order to do so,

> . . .man must come out of the false security into the venture of the infinite. . .[2]

Therefore, Buber's final word on all attempts to escape from the dialogic situation of faith into one that offers greater security, is that such security must be false. It falsifies the human situation, because there can be no certain final solutions to the mystery that underlies the situation of faith. One cannot answer these problems, as Buber says, "Real faith means the ability to endure life in the face of this mystery."[3] Such endurance is illustrated by the following hasidic tale told by one of the Zaddikim:

> "For a whole year I felt a longing to go to my master Rabbi Bunam and talk with him. But every time I entered the house, I felt I wasn't man enough. Once though, when I was walking across a field and weeping, I knew that I must run to the rabbi without delay. He asked: 'Why are you weeping?'
> "I answered: 'I am after all alive in this world, a being created with all the senses and all the limbs, but I do not know what it is I am created for and what I am good for in this world.'
> "'Little fool,' he replied, 'that's the same question I have carried around with me all my life. You will come and eat the evening meal with me today.'"[4]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 113f. [2] Ibid., p. 118. (my underlining).

[3] "The Prejudices of Youth," Israel and the World, p. 49.

[4] Buber, "Master and Disciple," The Later Masters, p. 251; see also, "The Fiftieth Gate," The Early Masters, p. 92.

The truths of revelation must be appropriated each day by the man of faith, and there is no guarantee that the word or action which served as the vehicle of appropriation on one occasion will do so on another. It is somewhat similar to the situation involved in listening to records. Sometimes one listens to a performance by the Budapest ensemble and the power and beauty of the music is almost overwhelming. On another occasion, the most prominent impression conveyed by this same recording may be that of the peculiarly phonographic quality of its sound. The vitality and meaning of the music is simply not present. Buber has spoken a word which suggests that he sees the role of the printed Bible in the revelatory situation in a way that is similar to the role of the recording in the musical situation. It can be the occasion for a revelatory encounter, but if offers no guarantee of one: ". . .the Word of God crosses my vision like a falling star to whose fire the meteorite will bear witness without making it light up for me, and I myself can only bear witness to the light but not produce the stone and say 'This is it.'"[1]

To illustrate: One day I was arguing with a friend who claimed that the Jewish tradition maintains a negative repressive attitude toward life and especially toward sex. I turned to the first chapter of Genesis in order to refute him. Quoting this chapter of the Bible in order to refute this charge was certainly not an original notion on my part. I might describe it as the response of a "party line" since so many of my teachers had referred to this chapter as the locus classicus for the statement of the world-affirming

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[1]"Dialogue," Between Man and Man, p. 7.

character of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

I took the Bible and began to read aloud "In the beginning God created. . ." As I went on I was increasingly overwhelmed by the power of the words, by the sense of the majestic creative power of God, by the vital proliferation of being throughout the creation. Thus overwhelmed I began to weep unashamedly in the presence of this friend and the argument faded into the background. It was no longer important to convince anyone and, instead, my thoughts turned to the mighty world-affirming words of the Baal Shem Tov, which words Buber says made him into a hasid, a disciple of this founder of Hasidism.

> "He shall seize the quality of eagerness with might, he shall rise eagerly from sleep, for he is become hallowed, and is become another man, and is worthy to beget, and is become imbued with the quality of the Holy One, praised be He, Who begat worlds."[1]

For the first time I felt as though I understood the words, "the Holy One, praised be He, Who begat worlds." Yet, when the weeping was over and the presentness was gone, the differences that divided my friend and myself remained.

Of course, I can turn again to the first chapter of the book of Genesis, and indeed I have often done so, but the fulness of that moment, and the peculiar sense of understanding I experienced, have not returned. The book bears witness to the encounter as the meteorite bears witness to the flame, but I cannot restore the encounter by reading the chapter, anymore

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[1] Buber, "The Foundation Stone," Hasidism, pp. 43f.

than one can rekindle the flame by pointing to the meteor.

Buber most accurately describes the revelatory encounter when he deals with grace and freedom, rather than with freedom alone. For while one cannot summon the power of Beethoven's music by playing a record, and while one cannot experience the sense of divine creativity simply by reading the first chapter of Genesis, the situation is not one of utter passivity. One must seek these vital moments—one must play the music and read the Bible again and again. Willing is significant. And in those arid moments when the music etched on a record sounds stale, and the words printed in the Bible are unilluminating, the record and the book nevertheless do bear witness to the reality of past encounters and to the hope of coming ones.

Buber is genuinely existential. It is important to realize that he is serious when he insists that although anything in the creation can be a vessel for the revelatory encounter; there is nothing in the creation, nothing in the Jewish tradition, which can offer the man of faith a guarantee of such an encounter.

> And if one. . .asks if one may be certain of finding what is right. . .once again the answer is No; there is no certainty. There is only a chance; but there is no other. The risk does not ensure the truth for us; but it, and it alone, leads us to where the breath of truth is to be felt.[1]

Holy insecurity as biblically rooted.—According to Buber, the attitude of risk and uncertainty with which the man of faith affirms the truths of revelation is not a modern existential notion which is read back into the Bible and the Jewish tradition. He sees it manifested in Hasidism

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[1]Buber, "The Question to the Single One," Between Man and Man, p. 71.

and in the Bible, indeed he regards it as an attitude fundamental to all true religion, an attitude which distinguishes true religion from magic.

> What distinguishes sacrifice and prayer from all magic?—Magic desires to obtain its effects without entering into relation, and practises its tricks in the void. But sacrifice and prayer are set "before the Face", in the consummation of the holy primary word that means mutual action: they speak the Thou, and then they hear.[1]

Buber regards the drive towards security, the false security of a fixed and utterly controllable god, a god who is therefore an idol, as a symptom of sick religion. He claims that in periods of increasing religious vitality the risk of entering into relation is freely accepted by men. With this in mind Buber interprets the wonderful name of God revealed to Moses at the Burning Bush - Ehyeh asher Ehyeh. He rejects the translation "I am that I am," and, rightly sensing the futuristic implications of the Hebrew, he translates it, "I shall be present as I shall be present." By this name, Buber claims, Yaweh intends to inform any Israelites influenced by the magical character of Egyptian religion that ". . .it is superfluous for you to wish to invoke me; in accordance with my character I again and again stand by those whom I befriend; and I would have you know indeed that I befriend you."[2] Buber elaborates this point by reflecting upon the repetition of the word Ehyeh. The first Ehyeh promises steady presence and assistance; it informs the people that they need not follow the practices of the Egyptians—there is no need to conjure Yaweh. The second Ehyeh adds that it is impossible to conjure Him.[3]

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[1] I and Thou, p. 83; see also, "The Faith of Judaism, Israel and the World, pp. 22ff.

[2] Moses, p. 52.

[3] Ibid., pp. 52f.

> It is necessary to remember Egypt as the background of such revelation: Egypt where the magician went so far as to threaten the gods. . .if they would not do his will. . . .Here religion was in practice little more than regulated magic. In the revelation at the Burning Bush religion is demagicized.[1]

Of course, no sooner was religion demagicized, than Moses had to begin the struggle to keep it that way. So Buber interprets Moses' insistence upon the aniconic character of Yaweh. To employ images of God would limit Him, whereas, in truth, He is absolute precisely because He is not limited to any particular manifestations in the realm of nature, but rather makes use of every kind of natural existence for His manifestation. Therefore, Moses' fight against image-making is a fight against fantasy masquerading as faith. Moses prohibited all image-making but, says Buber: "Moses certainly saw himself as facing a contrary tendency, namely that natural and powerful tendency which can be found in all religions, from the most crude to the most sublime, to reduce the Divinity to a form available for and identifiable by the senses."[2]

In imaging God, as in magicizing Him, men would eliminate the risk involved in dialogic relation with the Imageless One Whose presence cannot be conjured.

We can see the powerful influence of the hasidic movement on Buber's approach to the Bible when we consider the following story which is told about its founder:

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[1] Ibid., p. 53.

[2] Ibid., p. 127.

> When the master was no more than a little boy, the prophet Ahijah, the Shilonite, came to him and taught him the wisdom of the holy names. And because he was still so young, he wanted to find out what he could accomplish. So one day he cast his belt into the Dniester River when the current was very strong, pronounced a name and crossed the river walking on his belt. All his days he did penance for this to erase the flaw from his soul, and he succeeded. For once he had to cross the river at a time the current again ran strong, because a number of Jew-haters were after him with the intent to kill. So again he cast his belt into the waters and crossed on it but without pronouncing a holy name and with the aid of nothing but his great faith in the God of Israel.[1]

The parallel between this incident and the story of the sin of Moses as told in the book of Numbers should be obvious.[2] There Moses is told by God to command the rock to give water to the people of Israel, but instead he strikes the rock with his magic wand, thus committing the sin of relying on magic rather than faith.

Buber sees the Kabbalah, the Jewish mystical tradition, as subject to this same sin: ". . .the whole systematic structure of the Kabbalah is determined by a principle of certitude which hardly ever stops short, hardly ever cowers with terror, hardly ever prostrates itself."[3] He sets Hasidism in marked contrast to it because "hasidic piety, on the other hand, finds its real life just in stopping short, in letting itself be disconcerted, in its deep-seated knowledge of the impotence of all ready-made knowledge, of the incongruity of all acquired truth, in the 'holy insecurity.'"[4]

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[1] Buber, "Across the Dniester," The Early Masters, p. 74.

[2] Num. 20:2-13.

[3] Buber, "Symbolic and Sacramental," Hasidism, p. 142.

[4] Ibid. (my underlining).

The crucial evidence which Buber adduces to support his claim that the attitude of holy insecurity is rooted in the Bible is to be found in his discussion of false prophets. Buber is certain that the problem of distinguishing true from false prophets is involved in the problematics of dialogic relationship. No external criteria will do. The test cannot be whether or not the "word" comes to pass because, he says, there are numerous instances of unfulfilled prophecies of true prophets and, furthermore, this test would not help the man first hearing the prediction, before the time of its fulfilment had come.[1] So too, Buber rejects the notion that the prophet who prophesies doom is the true prophet because a true prophet speaks to the situation, as did Deutero-Isaiah in prophesying optimistically. Deutero-Isaiah in his time opposed the widely held view of a punishing deity just as Jeremiah in his day had rejected the even more commonly held view of a guardian deity who would not allow any great evil to befall his people.[2] Finally, Buber denies that one can tell a true prophet on the basis of his prophesying in the name of Yaweh rather than in the name of an idol (as suggested in the book of Deuteronomy[3]), since the false prophets may be subtle, and may invoke the name of Yaweh in an effort to sanctify the idolatrous desire of their own hearts.[4]

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[1] Buber, The Prophetic Faith, p. 178.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Deut. 13:1-3, 18:20-22.

[4] Buber, The Prophetic Faith, p. 73.

Because there can be no certain criteria for determining whether a given prophet is a true or a false one, Buber sees the phenomenon of prophecy, this vitally important part of the tradition, as fully involved with dialogic insecurity. This is ironic, because most people would use the prophet as an example of the man who operates in the realm of the spirit with complete confidence and certainty. How can Buber claim that men who prefaced their messages with the statement "Thus saith Yaweh" lived with holy insecurity as he has described it? The answer is given in Buber's interpretation of the encounter between Jeremiah and Hananiah.

The story is recounted in the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth chapters of the book of Jeremiah. It tells of God's word to Jeremiah commanding him to wear a yoke around his neck, a yoke which was to symbolize the subjugation of the kingdom of Judah and of other kingdoms of the Syriac strip to Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. Jeremiah wore the yoke and spoke his harsh words to these kingdoms. At one point, though, a prophet Hananiah accosted him and, claiming to speak in the name of Yaweh, broke the yoke which Jeremiah wore prophesying that in this fashion Yaweh would break the yoke of the king of Babylon.

If the general impression of the prophet as a man with absolute confidence in "His Word" is a true one, Jeremiah should immediately have denounced Hananiah as an impostor and called the wrath of God upon his head. He did no such thing. Instead he answered, "Amen! May the Lord do so."[1] Of course, Jeremiah did caution Hananiah to the effect that the burden of proof was especially heavy on the man who spoke the words the

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[1]Jer. 28:6.

people wanted to hear, but then, says Buber, ". . .Jeremiah went his way in silence. Not until God sent him to Hananiah with a message, did Jeremiah go to him and say what he had to say."[1] Before he could speak his word of doom to Hananiah Jeremiah had to wait for the renewal of encounter, even as does the dialogic man of faith today. Jeremiah, too, knew a holy insecurity. This is clear both in the light of this incident and in the agonized doubts that characterize his confessions. When Buber ponders the reasons for Jeremiah's departing in silence, he says that Jeremiah departed that way.

> . . .because in spite of everything there were still things he did not know. . . .God had, indeed, spoken to him only an hour before. But this was another hour. History is a dynamic process, and history means that one hour is never like the one that has gone before.[2]

In the same way we see that Isaiah of Jerusalem may have been involved in the holy insecurity with which even the prophet must live. For he reports the taunts the people hurled at him:

> Let him make haste
> let him speed his work
> that we may see it;
> let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near,
> and let it come that we may know it.[3]

It is clear that the prophet, like the dialogic man of faith, has no objective certainty which can protect him against the uncertainty of existence lived before the mystery. Buber says that over against confusion of the kind

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[1]"False Prophets," trans. Olga Marx, Israel and the World, p. 113.

[2]Ibid., pp. 113f.

[3]Isa. 5:19.

indicated in these taunts against Isaiah, and in false words like those of Hananiah, the true word is almost powerless.

> God does not corroborate it; He leaves to man the choice of opening his heart to the hard truth or of accepting the easy fraud as truth; He does not in any way lighten this choice for man; He does not endow His declaration with energy; He does not throw onto the scales of man's soul even a particle of His limitless power.[1]

Buber's summary of his treatment of the problem of false prophecy links the holy insecurity of the dialogic man of faith to God's hiding: "This God makes it burdensome for the believer and light for the unbeliever; and His revelation is nothing but a different form of hiding His face."[2]

The attitude of holy insecurity is very prominent in a statement of Buber's which serves as an excellent summary of his basic attitude towards truth:

> I have occasionally described my standpoint to my friends as the "narrow ridge". I wanted by this to express that I did not rest on the broad upland of a system that includes a series of sure statements about the absolute, but on a narrow rocky ridge between the gulfs where there is no sureness of expressible knowledge but the certainty of meeting what remains, undisclosed.[3]

A hasidic story indicates the relation of faith to revelation more clearly than any amount of commentary could.

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[1] Buber, The Prophetic Faith, pp. 176f.

[2] Ibid., p. 177.

[3] "What is Man?", Between Man and Man, p. 184.

> The rabbi of Ger was asked:
> "It is written: 'And Israel saw the great hand,'
> and further on it is written: 'And they believed
> in the Lord and in his servant Moses.' Why is this
> said? The question as to whether or not one believes
> can only be put while one does not as yet see."
> He answered: "You are mistaken. It is only then
> that the true question can be put. Seeing the great
> hand does not mean that faith can be dispensed with.
> It is only after seeing that we feel how much we are
> in need of it. Seeing the great hand is the beginning
> of belief in that which we cannot see."[1]

"Paradox Without Anguish"—
Buber and Kierkegaard

The thoroughly existential character of Buber's dialogic interpretation of revelation is now clearly established. Since the major categories of appropriation and holy insecurity are certainly related to Kierkegaard's treatment of revelation, a treatment which sets the stage for all contemporary discussion of this phenomenon, we must consider the question of Buber's relation to Kierkegaard.

We shall not consider the question of the extent to which Buber's reading in Kierkegaard may have influenced the formulation of his own thought. His references to Kierkegaard, especially in two articles devoted to a discussion of Kierkegaard's thought, indicate that his reading has been extensive.[2] However, to ascertain the precise character of Kierkegaard's

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[1] Buber, "Seeing and Believing," The Later Masters, p. 308.

[2] Buber, "The Question to the Single One," Between Man and Man, pp. 40-82; see also, "On the Suspension of the Ethical," trans. Maurice S. Friedman, Eclipse of God, pp. 147-156.

influence on Buber would require an exhaustive biographical inquiry which lies beyond the scope of this work. The issue is complicated by the fact that Buber's Existentialism evolves in interaction with the Jewish rather than with the Christian tradition, which may in part account for the lack of agony in Buber's presentation of existential tensions. For surely it is the Pauline strand of Christian thought which has largely led to the tortured expressions of these tensions in Christian thought, especially as one finds them in Kierkegaard's writings.

Whatever the extent of Kierkegaard's influence on Buber may have been, Buber is not a slavish imitator of Kierkegaard, and this becomes especially clear when we consider the radical contrast in the tone of their writings. In this connection, we must again refer to Tillich's observation that while Buber's thought may be less original and less powerful than Kierkegaard's, it is also less paradoxical and less forced.[1]

Certainly, we cannot dispute the fact that Kierkegaard's thought is remarkable for both its power and its originality. His originality stems in part from his conscious attempt to set himself against the prevailing theological and social characteristics of the Christianity of his day. He wrote against the theological attempt to render the truths of Christianity demonstrable and plausible by means of speculative and historical argument, and against the social situation in which Christian affiliation was a mark of respectability and conformity. In opposing these tendencies he brought a fresh outlook to the Christian faith and

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[1]Tillich, "Martin Buber and Christian Thought," op. cit., p. 517.

rediscovered many Pauline emphases which had been all but lost.

Of course, the power of Kierkegaard's thought is closely linked to its originality, and this is best demonstrated in the vividness of the imaginative stories he employs in presenting his major themes. These stories reveal a powerful literary personality, and by using them he is able to draw the reader into the spirit of his enterprise.

Consider for example the remarkable power with which his Philosophical Fragments expresses the poignancy of the Christian conception of Jesus Christ as the God-man. Here he tells the story of the courtship of a humble maiden by the most majestic emperor imaginable, an emperor who in this courtship disguises himself as a humble servant, lest she see his majesty directly and find herself so overwhelmed that she would not be able to love him as a person. Thus does Kierkegaard present the incarnation as a veiling of God in the very process of His unveiling Himself.[1]

Yet his thought is, as Tillich says, extremely forced. He presents the ideas of God and man, infinite and finite, necessity and freedom, eternal and temporal as logical categories which are mutually exclusive. He then asserts that it is precisely the character of the central Christian affirmation to declare that these categories are joined in the person of Jesus Christ, and that therefore the Christian must affirm an absurdity and stake his eternal happiness upon it. As but one illustration of this procedure we may consider his restatement of the problem of the Philosophical Fragments in his Concluding Unscientific Postscript:

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[1] Philosophical Fragments, see especially chaps. ii, iv.

The Problem Itself

> The eternal happiness of the individual is decided in time through the relationship to something historical, which is furthermore of such a character as to include in its composition that which by virtue of its essence cannot become historical, and must therefore become such by virtue of an absurdity.[1]

Kierkegaard develops this radically paradoxical character of Christian faith in all of his writings yet, in this respect, he is certainly not unique among theologians. However, the forced character of his thought derives from the fact that he subjects the life of the isolated man of faith to such acute and penetrating dialectical scrutiny that he might just as well be examining a strange insect under a microscope. We may recall that he employed his scathing irony to dismiss every possibility of mitigating the absurdity of the Christian faith. He compared one who attempted this by means of philosophical or historical argument to a man who is travelling on the road that leads to the Absolute, but to one who is travelling in the direction that leads away from significant relation to it—from that existential relation to it which is the only truth man can know. Because this intense scrutiny always forces the situation of faith to its very limits, there is an agonized quality to Kierkegaard's religious affirmations. Their absurdity severs the individual from all normal relations with the world. The fearful wrench that can be caused by this severance is clearly illustrated in Kierkegaard's renunciation of his fiancee Regina Olsen in order that he might stand as a "Single One" in an essential relation to God. And it was his view that in his time only the

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[1] Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 345.

"Single One," the man of faith in isolation, could stand in such a relation to God.

In marked contrast to Kierkegaard's agonized tone, Buber speaks powerfully and positively of the meaning that is vouchsafed to man in his existential contact with the living God. Buber is not oblivious to the somber aspects of faith; he knows that the revelatory encounter makes life heavy, but he insists that it makes life heavy with meaning.[1] He is not an obdurate optimist who is incapable of seeing evil in history. We have seen that his writings during the time of the Nazi persecution show just how deeeply he experienced the evil. Yet he regards the agonies of the Jewish people through history as part of the process of God's hiding Himself in the midst of His self-disclosure. The sting is removed from His hiding for those who accept the agony of their historical destiny as Jews, and we may recall the expression of one of the great hasidic masters, namely, that "'It ceases to be a hiding if you know it is a hiding.'"[2] A hasidic tale illustrates the sense in which the contradictions of history must be met as challenges:

> A disciple asked the Baal Shem: "Why is it that one who clings to God and knows he is close to him, sometimes experiences a sense of interruption and remoteness?"
> The Baal Shem explained: "When a father sets out to teach his little son to walk, he stands in front of him and holds his hands on either side of the child, so that he cannot fall, and the boy goes toward his father between his father's hands. But the moment he is close to his father, he moves away a little, and holds his hands farther apart, and he does this over and over, so that the child may learn to walk."[3]

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[1] I and Thou, p. 110.

[2] Buber, "Hiding," The Early Masters, p. 122.

[3] Buber, "Near and Far," ibid., p. 65.

In this simile we hear echoes of Hosea's haunting description of Yaweh's relation to the nation of Israel in its earliest days.

> . . .it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
> I took them up in my arms; but they did
> not know that I healed them. I led them
> with cords of compassion with the bands
> of love.[1]

Buber lived through a period when it was all but impossible to believe that it was with bands of love that Yaweh led and tested Israel. At no time in Jewish history has such an assertion seemed more absurd. Yet Buber emerged from it with his faith unshaken and with readiness for meeting again the challenge of the historical hour.

> We do not put up with earthly being, we struggle for its redemption, and struggling we appeal to the help of our Lord, Who is again and still a hiding one. In such a state we await His voice, whether it comes out of the storm or out of a stillness which follows it. Though His coming appearance resemble no earlier one, we shall recognize again our cruel and merciful Lord.[2]

Thus, there can be no questioning the profoundity of Buber's recognition of the problematics of the divine-human encounter. He recognizes the two aspects of God which are part of man's relational apprehension of the divine. He knows the polarity of the relation, and we may again recall those words in which he gives such forceful expression to it.

> Of course God is the "wholly Other"; but He is also the wholly Same, the wholly Present. Of course He is the Mysterium Tremendum that appears and overthrows; but He is also the mystery of the self-evident, nearer to me than my I.[3]

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[1] Hos. 11:3f.

[2] Buber, "Heaven and Earth," At the Turning, p. 62.

[3] Buber, I and Thou, p. 79.

But Buber does not see any reason to retreat from the world into a preoccupation with the agony of the contradictions which one experiences in the life of faith. Our Lord may be cruel as well as merciful, the Mysterium Tremendum that overthrows as well as the Mysterium Fascinosum that attracts, but to know this in the context of faith is to know that meaning is assured. Therefore, despite all the insecurity which must be borne by the man of faith; despite the absurdity of his faith when viewed from the standpoint of a detached observer, especially that of the detached observer which he himself from time to time becomes, Buber declares that "the absurd has been given me that I may withstand it in my life; this withstanding the absurd, is the meaning which I can experience."[1]

Seen from Buber's standpoint, Kierkegaard's attitude towards the absurd is not one of withstanding it in life and accepting the challenge of the contradictoriness of life, but is one of wallowing in the absurdity. Buber knows the force of the paradoxes full well but for him they are "paradoxes without anguish" without, that is, the excessive agony of a Kierkegaard, because Buber sees "the contradiction as theophany."

It is always difficult to account for differences between thinkers. The most subtle biographical and the most complex environmental factors come into account. Ultimately one has to recognize Kierkegaard and Buber as geniuses of radically different temperament and emphasis for all their existential similarities. Yet there are some observable factors which shed light upon their differences.

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[1]"Symbolic and Sacramental," Hasidism, p. 142.

The first of these is their respective historical situations. Kierkegaard spoke to a Christendom which regarded Christianity as intellectually plausible and socially respectable. He bemoaned the fact that "in ancient times only an individual here and there knew the truth; now all know it, except that the inwardness of its appropriation stands in an inverse relationship to the extent of its dissemination."[1] Everyone knew Christianity as the truth, everyone accepted it; the trouble, in Kierkegaard's view, was that no one lived it. He consciously set out to make Christianity more difficult to accept thereby, as he reports with withering satire, setting himself in opposition to the spirit of his age. For the great benefactors of his age were, in his view, all striving to make things easier. Great geniuses were at work on technological inventions designed to render man's physical tasks much easier, while geniuses of a different stripe were providing all sorts of aids and comforts that were designed to simplify the tasks of the spirit. And so Kierkegaard thought to himself: "'You must do something, but inasmuch as with your limited capacities it will be impossible to make anything easier than it has become, you must, with the same humanitarian enthusiasm as the others, undertake to make something harder.'"[2] Kierkegaard felt that he had to shock an almost hopelessly smug Christendom into realizing the radical character of the Christian claims. He had to show them just how hard it was really to be a Christian. He ended up by making it seem almost impossible to be one.

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[1] Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 181.

[2] Ibid., pp. 165f.

Buber's situation was a radically different one. He addressed himself to a German Jewish community that was quite sophisticated in intellectual affairs. Many members of this community regarded religion in general and Judaism in particular as intellectually outmoded and disreputable. A still greater number found their Jewish identity an onerous social stigma and wished to be rid of it. Therefore, Buber addressed a community whose main features both intellectually and socially were diametrically opposed to those of Kierkegaard's Christendom. It is small wonder that in his writings he does not agonize over the intellectual difficulties posited by Jewish monotheism, but rather, he exhorts the community to turn again to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Of course, Buber does deal with the difficulties—it is the burden of this study to show just how he does so—but he does not endlessly elaborate them, and his tone in presenting them is not agonized.

Another observable difference between these thinkers concerns their approach to community. When Kierkegaard subjects the man of faith to his intense dialectical scrutiny he considers him as an isolated individual, the "Single One" standing alone before God. Here again, we find that the difference between the two is not to be accounted for by any lacuna in Buber's thought. He is aware of the crucial significance of the individual person for the life of faith. Speaking of the revelatory encounter he says: "The meaning that has been received can be proved true by each man only in the singleness of his being and the singleness of his life."[1]

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[1]Buber, I and Thou, p. 111.

But he regards the isolation of Kierkegaard's "Single One" as a radical distortion of the situation of faith. He attempts to show that the solitariness of the "Single One," as Kierkegaard develops it, is so excessive that the "Single One" far from being the only one who can truly approach God, as Kierkegaard would have it, is one who cannot possibly approach Him. To demonstrate this point, Buber discusses Kierkegaard's statement that in order to come to love of God, he had to renounce the human object of his love, his fiancee Regina Olsen. In Buber's view: "That is sublimely to misunderstand God. . . .God wants us to come to him by means of the Reginas which he has created and not by renunciation of them."[1] Kierkegaard imagines that by renouncing all human objects of love he can come to Him Who is the true object of love, to God. But Buber insists that Kierkegaard, in letting go all human objects of love, and then conjuring up an object of love that he calls God, is not coming to love of God, but is casting love into the void. Buber insists that God wants us to come to Him by means of all of His creatures, but particularly through love of men. "One must have essential intercourse only with God, says Kierkegaard. It is impossible, says Hasidism, to have truly essential intercourse with God when there is no essential intercourse with men."[2]

It is Buber's essential intercourse with men, particularly in the solidarity of the Jewish faith, that enables him to move to an affirmation of faith that is far less agonized than Kierkegaard's. For, indeed,

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[1]"The Question to the Single One," Between Man and Man, p. 52.

[2]"Love of God and Love of One's Neighbor," trans. Dr. Immanuel Olsvanger and Canon Witton-Davies, Hasidism, p. 165.

there is an implicit criterion in Buber's view of faith that enables him to operate in a forthright and positive fashion within its context, despite the fact that he sees its problematic tensions quite clearly.

To introduce this criterion let us consider a definition of poetry which was once suggested in a discussion of literature: Poetry is what the poets have written throughout the ages, and what Shakespeare wrote better than anyone. The criterion which is implicit in all of Buber's writing on faith might be stated in similar terms: The life of faith is the life lived by the great leaders of Israel throughout the ages. It has been lived by Moses more fully than by anyone else, and has been best exemplified in modern times by the Zaddikim—the great masters of Hasidism. In Buber's recent thought this criterion almost becomes explicit. Let us again consider the powerful words of his "Distance and Relation":

> Human life and humanity come into being in genuine meetings. There man learns not merely that he is limited by man, cast upon his own finitude, partialness, need of completion, but his own relation to truth is heightened by the other's different relation to the same truth. . . .Men need, and it is granted to them, to confirm one another in their individual being by means of genuine meetings. But beyond this they need, and it is granted to them, to see the truth, which the soul gains by its struggle, light up to the others, the brothers, in a different way, and even so to be confirmed.[1]

There is no doubt that Buber's own being, and his relation to the truth, has been confirmed by his genuine meetings with the great leaders of the Jewish tradition. Buber, standing in essential relation to a community

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[1]"Distance and Relation," op. cit., p. 112.

of men who have gone before him and whose example lives on in the regenerative memory of his people, can withstand the absurd in his life, in a way that Kierkegaard living in the splendid isolation of the "Single One" cannot.

This point is of the great significance for this study. It helps to explain the prophetic power with which Buber is able to speak in the midst of all the problematics of holy insecurity. Buber has drunk so deeply of the heritage of Judaism, and feels the achievement of its great leaders so deeply that he can appropriate their message with confidence even in the midst of the contemporary crisis. However, the power of his restatement of their message derives from his own unique gifts as well as from the power of the tradition.

This implicit criterion also helps to explain what may have seemed a puzzling aspect of this presentation of Buber. At the end of Part One, in the context of a discussion of epistemology, Tillich was quoted as saying that existential thought lacks content, and that it acquires it only by turning to "controlling" knowledge or to revelation. It was observed that in Buber's case, existential thought acquires content by turning from the "I-Thou" encounters to revelation. Yet we have now discovered that, in Buber's view, revelation is but one form of the "I-Thou" encounter, and, what is more, it is continuous with other forms. How then can one claim that his purely existential "I-Thou" encounters yield no content, while his view of revelation, which is also radically existential, does yield content?

This point regarding his implicit criterion provides our answer. Here the "I-Thou" encounter is appropriating truths that have been uncovered before; it is a personal and existential process, but it is still an example of what Tillich calls "dependent" revelation. Furthermore, by carefully selecting the Jewish leaders who will serve as models for the dialogic man of faith, that is, primarily Moses, the Prophets, and the Zaddikim, Buber establishes a basis for valuing love over hate and justice over conquest. He certainly would not choose the leaders of the book of Judges or of the Hasmonaean dynasty.

When we turn to his ethical writings, we shall see that they are characterized by many different strands, but this implicit criterion, man's sense of following a path which has been walked before, will serve as a unifying theme.

Judaism and Christianity as Related in Holy Insecurity

The attitude of holy insecurity has important implications for Buber's interpretation of the relation between different traditions. He is especially aware of its relevance to the relation between Judaism and Christianity:

> Each genuine faith can acknowledge the mystery of another genuine one. The mystery of the other is within it and cannot be perceived from outside. No man outside of Israel

> knows the mystery of Israel. And no man outside Christianity knows of the mystery of Christianity. But without knowing each other's mystery, they can acknowledge its existence in each other.[1]

Buber claims to have a very special feeling for Jesus, a sensitivity of a kind which is different from that which any Christian could have. His most moving expression of this feeling is found in his report on a conversation which took place at a public meeting when a Christian protested against the selection of so many Jews as representatives of the various countries of Europe which were to meet at a future international conference. Buber says that the remarks seemed to him to be somewhat tainted in their justice and so he reports:

> Obstinate Jew that I am, I protested against the protest. I no longer know how from that I came to speak of Jesus and to say that we Jews knew him from within, in the impulses and stirrings of his Jewish being, in a way that remains inaccessible to the people submissive to him. "In a way that remains inaccessible to you"—so I directly addressed the former clergyman. He stood up, I too stood, we looked into the heart of one another's eyes. "It is gone", he said, and before everyone we gave one another the kiss of brotherhood.[2]

This statement illustrates the special way in which men of faith can recognize and acknowledge the legitimacy of a faith relation that belongs to a tradition other than their own, and the reconciling power of such recognition. It also shows the sense in which Buber regards Jesus as one of the great leaders of Israel. In a more recent writing about Jesus Buber says: "I am more than

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[1] Buber, "Kirche, Staat, Volk, Judentum," Die Stunde, p. 155. (my translation).

[2] "Dialogue," Between Man and Man, pp. 5f.; see also, I and Thou, pp. 66f. for a further statement of Buber's feeling for Jesus.

ever certain that a great place belongs to him in Israel's history of faith and that this place cannot be described by any of the usual categories."[1]

Since Buber sees Jesus as a Jewish figure, he allies himself with those who insist that the religion of Jesus was quite different from the religion about Jesus which was begun by Paul. According to Buber, Jesus as a Jew represented a late form of the Jewish Messianic striving, a striving for the realization of Israel's mission on earth, namely the hallowing of all of the creation by bringing it directly under the rule of God. The most obvious element of this task was the achievement of a genuine community in Israel, a community in which justice would be realized.

The main thesis of Buber's major work on Messianism, Königtum Gottes, is that in early Israel in the period of the "Judges" there was an attempt to have God reign directly in Israel. This failed and led to the experiment with earthly kings who never fulfilled Moses' theocratic idea—the bringing of all of life under God. The kings failed as God's anointed ones, as His "Messiahs" and the hope became increasingly eschatological.[2] Yet Buber insists that as long as this hope remained authentically Jewish it was a this-worldly hope for the direct rule of God and not a longing for an other-worldly kindgom of God. In his view Jesus represented this authentically Jewish hope transformed and renewed by his notion of the "Servant," (that is, by Deutero-Isaiah's description of the "Suffering Servant") but his followers conquered the nations with a dualized version of it that gave up the Jewish

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[1] Two Types of Faith, p. 13.

[2] Martin Buber, Königtum Gottes, Vol. I, Das Kommende Untersuchungen der Entstehungsgeschichte des Messianischen Glaubens (Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1932), p. x.

hope of bringing the political order under God. A tendency which Buber says is especially evident in Augustine and, he might well have added, in Luther.[1] He attributes the shift away from Jesus' own Jewish this-worldly Messianism—with its hope of redeeming all of the creation through the action of a people realizing God in all phases of their life—to St. Paul. Paul transformed this hope into faith in Jesus as the resurrected Lord who redeems individuals from sin.[2] Buber regards this shift as a tragic one because, despite his great admiration for Christianity,he feels that it inevitably leads to a dualism which separates the religious from the political aspects of life since its basic approach is to individuals rather than, as in the case with Judaism, to a people as a whole.[3]

It is Judaism's uniqueness that it encountered God as a people, indeed that it only became a people through its encounter with God and therefore is only authentically Israel if it brings all aspects of its life under God.[4] In leading mankind to the fulfilment of this task, by realizing it within its own community, Israel would be espousing what Buber calls the "national universalism" of the prophetic faith.[5] We have seen that this goal lies at the heart of Buber's Zionism.

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[1]Buber, "Kirche, Staat," Die Stunde, pp. 159f.

[2]Buber, Two Types of Faith; this thesis is expressed throughout the work, but see especially pp. 91-107, 171-174.

[3]Ibid., pp. 173f.; see also, "Kirche, Staat," Die Stunde, pp. 159f.

[4]Buber, "The Jew in the World," trans. Olga Marx, Israel and the World, pp. 167-172; see also, "Kirche, Staat," Die Stunde, pp. 156f.

[5]Buber, The Prophetic Faith, p. 46.

To summarize, the first criticism which Buber levels against Christianity with, to be sure, holy insecurity is the criticism that it has distorted Jesus' own Messianism by making it individualized and other-worldly, so that it expresses a Pauline dualism as between the political and the religious realms of life.

This criticism has been answered by contemporary Protestant theology in the writings of men like Reinhold Niebuhr, H. Richard Niebuhr, William Temple, and John C. Bennett when they relate Christian principles to the political realm. H. Richard Niebuhr in Christ and Culture shows that the dualistic position which Buber criticizes is only found in certain forms of the Christian approach to the political order.[1] And it is almost ironical to note that Reinhold Niebuhr, the contemporary Christian theologian who has done the greatest amount of work in overcoming the dualism which Buber criticizes, is thoroughly Pauline in spirit and content.

Another point of criticism that Buber directs against Christianity is also related to its dualistic tendencies. He claims that Christianity is particularly vulnerable to the Marcionite heresy, since by virtue of its joining of revelation and redemption in the person of Jesus Christ the two are set against creation. This leads to the tendency to regard the created order as something from which man must be redeemed rather than pointing to the Jewish view of the creation as something which man must redeem by hallowing it. Judaism preserves this fundamental perspective on the creation, by keeping

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[1] H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), see pp. 39-44, for a very brief summary of the different Christian approaches to culture and the political order.

the three ideas distinct, which Buber declares leads to a legitimate interrelation between them in which none stands opposed to another.

> From the point of view of the Bible, revelation is, as it were, focused in the "middle," creation in the "beginning," and redemption in the "end." But the living truth is that they actually coincide, that "God every day renews the work of the Beginning," but also every day anticipates the work of the end. Certainly both creation and redemption are true only on the premise that revelation is a present experience. But if I did not feel creation as well as redemption happening to myself, I could never understand what creation and redemption are.[1]

Buber cannot claim that Christianity, in any of its forms, has actually adopted the Marcionite position; it is, after all, a heresy. What this criticism really involves is Buber's rejection of the Christian claim that the Incarnation is the midpoint of history and that Jesus Christ is the final revelation, a claim necessarily made by any form of Christian orthodoxy, however new and sophisticated it may be. As we have seen, revelation is continuous for Buber so that he can find no special midpoint which is qualitatively different from the revelations that take place everywhere and at all times.

> Creation is the origin, redemption the goal. But revelation is not a fixed, dated point poised between the two. The revelation at Sinai is not this midpoint itself, but the perceiving of it, and such perception is possible at any time. That is why a psalm or a prophecy is no less "Torah," i.e. instruction, than the story of the exodus from Egypt.[2]

As Judaism knows of no midpoint in the process of revelation that can be considered a final revelation, so too, it knows of no special redeemer who

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[1] "The Man of Today," Israel and the World, p. 96; see also, "The Faith of Judaism, ibid., pp. 25-27.

[2] "The Man of Today," ibid., p. 94.

has entered history and delivered man from sin. It rejects Jesus as the Messiah because God's kingdom, in the Jewish sense of His direct rule on earth, is not yet. He speaks of the central Jewish consciousness of this fact as "... the basic consciousness that God's redeeming power is at work everywhere and at all times, but that a state of redemption exists nowhere and never."[1] This attitude sets Judaism apart from Christianity but not, according to Buber, utterly apart since the two faiths share a book, the Old Testament, and an expectation. The expectation of Judaism is of the coming of the Messiah, still unknown; the expectation of Christianity, which cannot remain oblivious to the unredeemed character of the world, is of a second coming of the Messiah already known. Buber suggests that the two communities can await the advent of this "coming One" together and at times even prepare for it together.[2] Yet the differences remain and Buber points to them in unforgettable language:

> Pre-messianically our destinies are divided. Now to the Christian the Jew is the obdurate man, who declines to see what has happened; and to the Jew the Christian is the incomprehensibly daring man, who affirms in an unredeemed world that its redemption has been accomplished. This is a gulf which no human power can bridge.[3]

There is a hasidic tale which quite precisely defines the character of the Jewish rejection of all Messianic claims that have heretofore been made:

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[1] "The Two Foci," ibid., p. 34.

[2] Ibid., p. 39.

[3] Ibid., p. 40.

> When Rabbi Menahem was living in the Land of Israel, a foolish man climbed the Mount of Olives unobserved. When he got to the top, he blew the ram's horn. The people were startled and soon a rumor sprang up that this was the blowing of the ram's horn which was to precede redemption. When this was reported to Rabbi Menahem, he opened his window, looked out into the world, and said: "This is no renewal!"[1]

Judaism looks at all the centuries of the Christian era and delivers this same judgment, "this is no renewal." This is the point at which Buber and any Jew must reject the Christian claim. For the Jew, Christ cannot be the center of history either as Revealer or Redeemer.[2]

In a further point of criticism which he levels at Christian faith Buber is fundamentally in error. For in Two Types of Faith, he distinguishes between the Jewish type of faith, which involves trusting someone without being able to offer sufficient reasons for trusting him, and the Christian type, which involves holding something to be true without being able to give sufficient reasons for holding it as true.[3] In the Jewish type of faith one finds oneself in it since it stems from Israel's birth as a community of faith; in the Christian type, one is converted to it as an individual. The Christian form of faith is therefore an instance of the Greek acknowledgment of noetic truth which Buber contrasts with the Hebraic view of knowledge through contact, through "I-Thou" intimacy.[4] Although each faith principle ultimately leads to the

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[1]Buber, "At the Window," The Early Masters, p. 179.

[2]Buber, "Spirit and Body of the Hasidic Movement," trans. Dr. Greta Hort and Canon Witton-Davies, Hasidism, pp. 74f.; see also, "Kirche, Staat," Die Stunde, p. 154.

[3]Buber, Two Types of Faith, p. 7.

[4]Ibid., pp. 8-11.

attitude of the other type, the Christian to contact and the Jewish to acceptance of truth, it is clear that Buber regards the Jewish type as more authentic. In the balance of the book he attempts to show that Jesus was close to the Pharisees in spirit and held to the Jewish contact principle which was rooted in the appropriation of faith by a people. He attributes the development of the Christian individuated principle of faith to a Hellenistic aberration on the part of St. Paul.

This thesis is unconvincing. Buber's sympathetic response to Jesus does not extend to Pauline Christianity, and he regards its resurgence in our day as an unfortunate symptom of the crisis of our time.[1] However, in this discussion of Pauline Christianity he might well have remembered his own words regarding the impossibility of penetrating the mystery of another faith from outside that faith. For, as matters stand, Christian thinkers could turn some of Buber's own words against him and claim that in its Pauline form Christian faith is more like Buber's first type of faith, that is, trust in a person, than is Jewish faith itself. We have already noted Buber's statements that ". . .God loves like a personality and. . .wishes to be loved like a personality. And if He was not a person in Himself, he, so to speak, became one in creating Man in order to love man and to be loved by him. . ."[2] and also his saying that, "it is, indeed, even permissible for the believer to believe that God became a person for love of him, because in our human mode of existence the only reciprocal relation with us that exists is a personal one."[3] A Christian in quoting these statements might then add: and God did become incarnate in a concrete person for just these reasons,

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[1] Ibid., pp. 170-174.

[2] "The Idea of Deity," Eclipse of God, pp. 81f.

[3] "Religion and Ethics," ibid., p. 127.

because He loves like a personality and wishes to be loved like a personality. Only in this case (the case of Christianity) one does not have to talk of a tortured and abstract concept of personality, an "absolute personality," as Buber does, but one may talk of a human personality, Jesus of Nazareth, as the "Word that became flesh."

To be sure, the incarnation may be rejected on the ground that ultimately it bridges the unbridgeable; it eliminates the absolute gulf between God and man, but it is certainly inaccurate of Buber to set Christian faith, in its Pauline form, in opposition to Jewish faith on the grounds that it lacks a starting point of personal trust and contact. It certainly has such a starting point, and is, therefore, basically Hebraic in its contours.

For all this criticism of what may be regarded as Buber's misunderstanding of and lack of feeling for Pauline Christianity, he has carried on a lifetime of fruitful dialogue with Christians, and this has enabled his own dialogic thought to find such a sympathetic audience among contemporary Protestant thinkers. One of his most moving statements on the relation of the two faiths, a statement made to a Christian audience, may well serve as a fitting conclusion to this section.

> It behooves both you and us to hold inviolably fast to our own true faith, that is to our own deepest relationship to truth. It behooves both of us to show a religious respect for the true faith of the other. This is not what is called "tolerance," our task is not to tolerate each others' waywardness but to acknowledge the real relationship in which both stand to the truth. Whenever we both, Christian and Jew, care more for God himself than for our images of God, we are united in the feeling that our Father's house is differently constructed than our human models take it to be.[1]

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[1]"The Two Foci," Israel and the World, p. 40.

PART THREE

ETHICS OF THE DIALOGIC LIFE

CHAPTER VIII

HASIDISM—THE SACRAMENTAL VIEW OF THE WORLD

Jewish World Affirmation

Although religions urge men to concentrate on the permanently significant aspects of existence and to lay less emphasis on ephemeral goods, men persist in focusing their attention on the treasures of this earth which moth and rust consume and which thieves break in and steal.[1] They forget that all flesh is grass and that the grass withers when the breath of God blows upon it; they forget that only God stands forever.[2] Consequently, religions often develop a negative attitude toward culture and the affairs of the world. In the New Testament use of the term, the "World" is frequently designated as the power which cuts man off from God.[3] This attitude toward the world frequently results in an ethical strategy of withdrawal, and the religion which holds this attitude urges its followers to form a holy community, leaving to Caesar that which is his, namely, the general political

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[1] Matt. 6:19-21.

[2] Isa. 40:6-8

[3] Ernst Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, trans. Olive Wyon, Vol. I (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1931), pp. 58-64; H. R. Niebuhr, op. cit., pp. 45-49.

and cultural order which, of course, represents that dualistic approach to the universe wherein some things are held to be of God and others of Caesar.

An awareness of the world as the power which comes between God and man is not absent in Judaism. A zaddik once said: "'What a good and bright world this is if we do not lose our hearts to it, but what a dark world, if we do!'"[1] Buber makes this same point in comparing "world history" with biblical history—the former is concerned with success while the latter knows nothing of the intrinsic value of success.[2] Success, the god of "world history" is most emphatically a "bitch goddess" in Buber's view, and it <u>does</u> come between God and man.

Buber claims that there is a great difference between Judaism and other religions in terms of the ethical implications which they draw from the fact that the world can come between God and man. Judaism, especially as manifested in Hasidism, never draws the common and mistaken ethical implication of this insight, namely, that men should withdraw from the world. "Although faith in a life hereafter is integral to Judaism, there has always been a strong tendency to provide an earthly residence for perfection."[3] He claims that the Messianic concept of a future age in which this earthly residence for perfection would be achieved, was always a powerful idea in Judaism, one which captured the imagination of the people and sustained them in their sufferings throughout the course of history. Despite the power of this concept, Buber

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[1]Buber, "The Twofold World," <u>The Early Masters</u>, p. 97.

[2]"Biblical Leadership," trans. Greta Hort, <u>Israel and the World</u>, pp. 124f.

[3]Buber, <u>The Early Masters</u>, p. 2.

claims that it did not endow daily life with the constant undaunted joy in the here and now, which can spring only from fulfilment in the lived present, and not from a hope for future fulfilment. However, hasidic Messianism was an exception: "The hasidic movement did not weaken the hope in a Messiah, but it kindled both its simple and intellectual followers to joy in the world as it is, in life as it is, in every hour of life in this world, as that hour is."[1] Since for Buber Hasidism represents a concentrated and fulfilled form of Judaism, it is clear that he regards its positive and joyous attitude towards this world as an attitude which is normatively Jewish.

It is important to note that Buber here presents Hasidism as speaking of ". . .joy in the world as it is, in life as it is," and, "in every hour of life in this world as that hour is." Buber rejects any glorification of an ideal world which would lead to a deprecation of this world as a world which is illusory or as one which is inadequate to man's highest striving: "There is no illusory world, there is only the world. . ."[2] He rejects any attempt to flee from this world to a state of ecstatic union with the ground of being.

> What does it help my soul that it can be withdrawn anew from this world into unity, when this world itself has of necessity no part in the unity—what does all "enjoyment of God" profit a life that is rent in two? If that abundantly rich heavenly moment has nothing to do with my poor earthly moment—what has it then to do with me, who have still to live, in all seriousness still to live, on earth?[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 3.

[2] I and Thou, p. 77.

[3] Ibid., p. 87.

For Buber, living on earth involves living in full consciousness of God, but this consciousness of God involves no diminution of earthly reality, or the seriousness with which he regards it.

> From of old Israel has proclaimed that the world is not God's place, but that God is "the place of the world," and that yet He dwells within it. Hasidism expresses this principle in a new way, namely, in an entirely practical way. Because God is immanent in the world, the world becomes—in a general religious sense—a sacrament. If the world was God's place, it could not be a sacrament; it is only the fact that the God who transcends the world is yet also immanent in it which can turn the world into a sacrament.[1]

In order to see the precise terms in which Buber presents Hasidism's sacramental view of the universe, which provides the cosmic stage against which he sets his ethical thinking, we must turn to his treatment of the doctrine of the sparks.

The Doctrine of the Sparks

The following sketch of hasidic cosmology, relies upon Buber's presentation of hasidic thought, and does not assess its accuracy by means of a comparison with hasidic source material. In addition, it depends upon Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism for the treatment of some important ideas which are found in the Lurianic Kabbalah, ideas which Hasidism appropriated.[2] This procedure is justified because Buber himself refers to Scholem's treatment of the Kabbalah as the standard work on the subject, and he quotes it on more than one occasion.[3] Since Scholem's own treatment of Kabbalistic

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[1]"Spinoza," Hasidism, p. 101.

[2]Gershom C. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism (New York: Schocken Books, 1946).

[3]Buber, "Symbolic and Sacramental," Hasidism, p. 137.

speculations is itself a brief one, the still briefer sketch of a few of the concepts of the Lurianic Kabbalah which follows must necessarily be no more than an indication of some of its central emphases. However, since it is only intended to serve as a background for Buber's presentation of the ethical emphases of Hasidism, this procedure is adequate.

The first concept of the Lurianic Kabbalah which we must consider is that of the Tsimtsum. This doctrine is an attempt to lend substance to the idea of "creation out of nothing" by asserting that the first act of God, Who was All in All, was to contract Himself into Himself. God withdrew Himself from a part of Himself, thereby leaving room for the world, and for the world as a genuinely independent existent, not as a facet of the divine All in All. Thus, the doctrine opposes all notions of a Pantheism which is rooted in a view of creation by a process of emanation from the divine ground of being.[1] The next concept of importance for this background of Hasidism is that of the Shevirath Ha-Kelim or the "Breaking of the Vessels." The divine contraction of Kabbalistic mythology was an act similar to inhalation as in the human process of breathing. It was followed by an act of exhalation, a beaming of the divine light into the primordial space created by the initial act of inhalation. In order to bring forth an ordered creation of finite beings and forms it was necessary that the divine light that flowed into the primeval space be contained in special bowls or "Vessels," in the Kelim. In the lower spheres of the hierarchy of creation, the "Vessels" proved unable to contain the divine light

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[1] Scholem, op. cit., pp. 260ff.

and they broke.[1] This "Breaking of the Vessels" represented a cosmic act of disruption which took place even before the Creation and upset the natural hierarchy of the orders that were to appear in the Creation. There is apparently a wide range of speculation within Kabbalism as to the precise manner in which this disruption finally came to be manifested as evil in man's historical existence.[2]

However, it is clear that the Kabbalistic interpretation of the emergence of evil which was most influential for Hasidism, as Buber understands the movement, was the idea of the "Spark of the Shekhinah." The Shekhinah is an ancient Jewish symbol for the immanent aspect of God, for that aspect of God which dwells in the world, dwells among men, and which even partakes of the exile of Israel. In Kabbalistic speculation, the "Breaking of the Vessels," that cosmic disruption which preceded the creation of this world in which we live, accounts for the fact that the immanent aspect of God, the Shekhinah, is in exile. No aspect of the cosmos is in its proper place in the divinely ordained hierarchy, and so the holy sparks of the Shekhinah are dispersed amidst all things within creation. The holy dwells amidst the unclean. The concept of the Tikkun, of restoration of the divinely intended order, evolved within Lurianic speculation as a notion which pointed to the redemptive process within Creation. This doctrine of the Tikkun was expressed in historical terms in Kabbalistic Messianism which taught that history would mirror the cosmic process of restoration, of redemption. The redemption of Israel from exile would be symbolic of the restoration of the Shekhinah to its proper

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[1] Ibid., pp. 265-268.

[2] Ibid., pp. 268-273.

place in the cosmos; it would represent the return of the Shekhinah from its exile with Israel. Therefore, Israel's historical destiny reflects the act of restoration of divine order to the cosmos, and the Messianic fulfilment would therefore symbolize the removal of all blemish and evil from being.[1]

Through this doctrine of the Tikkun man's activities receive cosmic significance and Lurianic Kabbalism maintained that all man's actions should be characterized by Kavanah, the mystical intention to restore the original harmony of creation which had been disturbed by the "Breaking of the Vessels."[2]

In Buber's view, and Scholem is in complete agreement with him, Hasidism did not add any genuinely new teachings to the Kabbalah. Its contributions lay along three different lines. The first of these was the popularizing of Kabbalistic teachings, a process which began before Hasidism and which this movement furthered.[3] A second and more significant development was the ethicizing of the teachings of the later Kabbalah, for Hasidism was not as much interested in the cosmological speculations of the Kabbalah, as it was in the implications of these speculations for the life of man.[4] A third contribution of Hasidism was the elimination of the withdrawn esoteric quality of the Kabbalistic schools which was achieved by establishing a full community that was centered in its teachings.[5] The movement tried to induce

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[1] Ibid., pp. 273-275. [2] Ibid., pp. 274ff. [3] Ibid., pp. 340-342.

[4] Buber, "The Foundation Stone," Hasidism, pp. 55ff.; "God and the Soul," trans. Carlyle and Mary Witton-Davies, ibid., pp. 150ff.; The Early Masters, pp. 2-4.

[5] Buber, "The Beginnings of Hasidism," Hasidism, pp. 1-6; Scholem, op. cit., p. 342.

individual members of the hasidic community, men who engaged in menial occupations that were not related to learning, to feel that they were participating in the cosmic process of the Tikkun, of the restoration of the divinely ordained harmony. To be sure, the great masters of Hasidism, the Zaddikim served as mediators between the great masses of hasidic disciples and God, in a way that finally became corrupt. However, initially they performed great acts of leadership in pointing their followers to God rather than to the glories and achievements of the individual Zaddikim themselves.

Buber sees the hasidic formulation of this doctrine of the sparks as a crucial statement of the Jewish attitude toward the world and towards man's ethical task. "The sparks doctrine of the later Kabbala has become in the hands of the Baal-shem-tov an ethical teaching, and has been amplified into a precept embracing the whole life of man."[1] The cosmic catastrophe is no longer the point of speculation, rather, the focus is upon the task that stands before man.

> In a primordial catastrophe before the creation of our world. . . sparks of the divine fire fell into all things in the world. The spark is concealed in a material shell, in a mineral, in a plant, in an animal. . . .Only through man is there redemption for him [for the spark]. It rests with men to purge the sparks of things and beings. . .until the holy spark can return to its origin.[2]

Man's central task is to play a role in the cosmic process of redemption by restoring the sparks of the Shekhinah to their divine essence. In Hasidism, unlike the esoteric forms of the Kabbalah which withdrew from the community, this task is domesticated.

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[1] "The Foundation Stone," Hasidism, p. 55.

[2] Ibid., pp. 55f.

> Man's service with the sparks takes place in everyday life. . . .In the clothes which you put on, in the implements you use, in the food you eat, in the domestic animal that works for you, in all of these are hidden sparks, which yearn for redemption, and if you treat things and beings with care and goodwill and faithfulness, then you redeem them.[1]

Buber therefore draws two central ethical principles from the hasidic restatement of the doctrine of the sparks, two ethical principles which complement each other. The first of these is that any act performed with Kavanah can be a holy act. The second is that such an act must be performed with man's whole being, must be performed by man as a spiritual-physical unity. Taken together, these two principles affirm the central Jewish insight that no aspect of the world is unredeemable. The first points outward towards the world, and insists that a divine spark inheres in all things so that any act can be a holy act, any act can raise the spark imprisoned in things; the second points to man himself and maintains that there is no part of him that cannot participate in holiness. Together the two principles stand against all the dualisms that have plagued the religions of mankind, against all the world-denying tendencies of religions which have driven men to asceticism and to withdrawal from cultural life. In Buber's view, the doctrine of the sparks is the hasidic way of expressing the central teaching of Judaism, namely, that man's task in the world is to turn to God by hallowing His creation, for:

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[1] Ibid., p. 56.

> The Law differentiates between the holy and the profane, but the Law desires to lead the way toward the messianic removal of the differentiation, to all-sanctification. Hasidic piety no longer recognizes anything as simply and irreparably profane: "the profane" is for hasidism only a designation for the not yet sanctified, for that which is to be sanctified.[1]

Thus, Hasidism carries the ancient teaching of the Torah one step further. It will not speak of the holy and the profane, but only of the holy and the not yet hallowed. This is the consummation of Israel's attitude of world-affirmation—for this attitude towards the world is not merely one of accepting it, but of rejoicing in it. "Hasidism teaches that the rejoicing in the world, if we hallow it with our whole being, leads to rejoicing in God."[2]

By rejoicing in the world, without losing one's heart to it, Hasidism would achieve the fulfilment of God's purpose in limiting Himself in order to create the world; it would make of the world something heavenly by raising the sparks and restoring the Shekhinah to God.

> When Rabbi Hanokh had said the verse in the psalms: "The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth hath He given to the children of men," he paused and went on to say: "'The heavens are the heavens of the Lord'—you see they are already of a heavenly character. 'But the earth hath He given to the children of men'—so that they might make of it something heavenly."[3]

It is in terms of Buber's understanding of the hasidic doctrine of the sparks, which he claims demands that men participate in the redemption of

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[1]"The Two Foci," Israel and the World, p. 34.

[2]Martin Buber, The Way of Man, According to the Teachings of Hasidism (Chicago: Wilcox & Follett Co., 1951), p. 20.

[3]Buber, "To the Children of Men," The Later Masters, p. 317.

the universe by hallowing the creation, that we can understand the following crucial statement from I and Thou:

> If you explore the life of things and of conditioned being you come to the unfathomable, if you deny the life of things and of conditioned being you stand before nothingness, if you hallow this life you meet the living God.[1]

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[1] I and Thou, p. 79.

CHAPTER IX

THE ETHIC OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Dialogic Man as Unified, Passionate and Humble

Wholeness.—Buber's understanding of man's goal in existence is now perfectly clear. The task set before man is that of participating in the redemption of the world, by hallowing the creation. Yet this statement of the goal of man does not provide ethical content for Buber's thought. It merely provides the positive world-affirming tone of his ethics.

The implicit criterion which, we have observed, Buber employs in the context of revelation is even more relevant to his ethical thought. Buber derives his ethical content from the study of the lives and teachings of the great leaders of Judaism, particularly those of the prophets and the Zaddikim. It is interesting to note that these two groups complement each other. The prophets urged the people to dedicate themselves to Yaweh, to dedicate themselves to Him with their corporate national existence. The prophets said that Israel would have to realize social justice within the nation in order to accomplish this goal. The Zaddikim, on the other hand, lived in a time and place where the Jewish people were utterly dissociated from the political order, from the instruments of power, and therefore they addressed their message and their life's work to their own local communities, the hasidic communities which gathered around them.

The prophet is a man who works through failure. He recognizes the fact that the king, the people, "world history" are all concerned with success, and so he stands opposed to them in the name of a true relation to God. It would seem that Buber does not believe that the prophetic hopes will be realized before the Messianic age.[1]

The zaddik is the man who acts as helper in the intimacy of communal life. Through his efforts he leads his followers into a proper relation to God. However, the true zaddik, as he existed before the degeneration of Hasidism, never violated the responsibilities of his followers, rather, he gave them the power of seeing their task more clearly; he gave them the courage to fulfil their task of turning to God, thereby becoming whole men.[2]

The idea of the whole man, namely, that man must bring his entire being as a spiritual-physical entity to the service of God is not, according to Buber, a concept which originated in Hasidism; it is a concept which he regards as central to every stratum of the Jewish tradition. It is present in Moses' theocratic conception which demands that the people dedicate the whole of their corporate existence to God.[3] It is present in the Mosaic Law which reminds the people that the very framework of their existence is sustained by God, since their relations with each other, their relations to the earth, and their relations to the seasons are all seen as part of God's

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[1]"Biblical Leadership," Israel and the World, pp. 130-133.

[2]Buber, The Early Masters, pp. 4ff.

[3]Buber, Moses, pp. 101-109.

providential order. All aspects of existence are to be seen in terms of their potential for being hallowed.[1] Buber sees this view as one which is also prominent in the prophets. He regards Jeremiah as the culminating prophetic figure and says of him that: "He was indeed, more than all his predecessors, inclined to feel that for the sake of hallowing the whole life, the partition between sacred and profane should be removed. . ."[2]

Buber also finds the idea that man must serve God with his whole being powerfully expressed in the Talmud. The talmudic teaching is an elaboration of the statements in Genesis which deal with the evil imaginings of the human heart.[3] The biblical passages convey the idea that man's imaginings are evil, but not altogether evil, they are evil and good; for the heart's willing decision to turn to God can also arise from man's imaginative faculty. According to Buber, the talmudic rabbis adapted the Hebrew work yetzer, imagining, and altered its meaning to urge or inclination. They claimed that man has two urges, the yetzer hatov or good urge and the yetzer harah or evil urge. Both urges are necessary to man, the evil urge being regarded as the driving impulsein man, the one which leads him to woo women, to beget children, to build homes, and to engage in economic activity. Furthermore, Buber insists that some talmudic sources even regard the evil urge as good, since in the first chapter of Genesis it is stated that God looked upon all that He had made, and regarded it as very good.[4] The evil urge in their view, is not evil in itself, but is evil only because man fails to direct his whole being, his creative impulses in their entirety, to God.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 131ff., 181f. [2] The Prophetic Faith, p. 175.

[3] Buber, "Images of Good and Evil," trans. Michael Bullock, Good and Evil, pp. 90-93. (The biblical passages referred to are Gen. 6:5, 8:21.)

[4] Gen. 1:31.

The good inclination then, would simply be the power that properly directs man's driving impulses. "Man's task, therefore, is not to extirpate the evil urge, but to reunite it with the good."[1]

Man is the only creature for whom the real is continually fringed by the possible, that is why it is so important for man to reunite the evil urge with the good, for man will necessarily act; he will necessarily actualize possibilities, and unless the good yetzer directs the driving impulse of the evil yetzer he will not act rightly. "To the extent to which the soul achieves unification it becomes aware of direction, becomes aware of itself as sent in quest of it. It comes into the service of good or into service for good."[2]

The idea of serving God with the whole being is carried still further by Hasidism which elaborates the notion of unification of the soul:

> However, what is meant by unification of the soul would be thoroughly misunderstood if 'soul' were taken to mean anything but: the whole man, body and spirit together. The soul is not really united unless all bodily energies, all the limbs of the body are united.[3]

Buber attributes this view to the Baal-Shem-Tov who interpreted the biblical passage "Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with all thy might" to mean that all deeds should be done with the whole of man's being, no part of him should remain uninvolved. Buber also quotes another of the great masters of

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[1]Buber, "Images," Good and Evil, p. 95; see also, Martin Buber, ed. "Evil," Ten Rungs, Hasidic Sayings, trans. Olga Marx (New York: Schocken Books, 1947), pp. 89f.

[2]Buber, "Images," Good and Evil, p. 127.

[3]Buber, The Way of Man, p. 27.

Hasidism who even declared that virtues become vices unless they are part of a unified pattern of virtue, a unified soul: "'If someone is merely good, he is a debauched lover; if he is merely pious, he is a thief; if he is merely clever, he is a disbeliever. Only when a person has all these three qualities combined, is he capable of serving God completely.'"[1] Buber then concludes that "whatever is isolated is confusing. Wholeness alone is reliable and leads man to salvation."[2]

We have already dealt with the existential emphasis upon man as an existing individual, rather than as a speculative thinker. According to this view, truth is not to be determined by merely intellectual criteria, for ideas to be true they must be relevant to the person taken as a whole. This same emphasis is one which Buber finds in every stratum of the Jewish tradition, but especially in Hasidism. It is very much in evidence in a word we have already noted; a disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch said:

> "I did not go to the maggid in order to hear Torah from him, but to see how he unlaces his felt shoes and laces them up again."[3]

Man must bring a spiritual-physical unity into all his acts. Therefore, at the outset of I and Thou, Buber declares that "the primary word I-Thou can only be spoken with the whole being."[4]

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[1] "Love of One's Neighbor," Hasidism, p. 167.

[2] Ibid., p. 168.

[3] Buber, "To Say Torah and To Be Torah," The Early Masters, p. 107.

[4] I and Thou, p. 3.

In one of Buber's earliest works on Hasidism he wrote a section on "The Life of the Hasidim."[1] Here he made a selection of certain qualities which he regards as the finest fruits of the process of unification. These qualities by no means exhaust or represent all the virtues which were exemplified by the great hasidic masters, but they do represent the ones which Buber regards as being most significant, and through them I think we will be able to come to a statement of Buber's ethic. The qualities are those of humility, fervor, intention, and service. The first two may be expounded briefly while the others will require more extensive discussion in connection with Buber's attitude toward legalism.

Humility.—Humility is a central virtue for the whole man, because he would not be whole if he took pride in his wholeness. Thus one of the great masters of Hasidism said: "'One should not make a great to-do about serving God. Does the hand boast when it carries out the will of the heart?'"[2] It is the mystery of humility that a man who achieves wholeness becomes increasingly aware of himself as but a part of the community of existence.[3]

There are a great many hasidic tales which emphasize this quality of humility. One story tells of a tailor who ruined a dress which he made for the wife of a high ranking officer, a commission that was most important to him. In despair he went to a zaddik who told him to return and offer to redo the dress. Then said the zaddik:

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[1]Martin Buber, The Legend of the Baal-Shem, trans. Maurice Friedman (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), pp. 17-50.

[2]Buber, "The Nature of Service," The Later Masters, p. 59.

[3]Buber, The Legend of the Baal-Shem, pp. 42f.

> ". . .rip it up and sew the pieces together again just as they are."
> The man did as he was told. Timidly and humbly he made over the dress he had botched in his proud assurance, and it turned out perfect.[1]

An even more significant story tells of a group of Hasidim who asked their zaddik why humility is not commanded in the Torah, since it is worth all the other virtues put together.

> The rabbi replied: "If anyone were humble in order to keep a commandment, he would never attain true humility. To think of humility as a commandment is the prompting of Satan. He bloats a man's heart telling him he is learned and righteous and devout, a master in all good works, and worthy to think himself better than the general run of people; but that this would be proud and impious since it is a commandment that he must be humble and put himself on a par with others. And a man who interprets this as a commandment and does it, only feeds his pride the more in doing so."[2]

Fervor.—We may now recall the sublimely world-affirming statement of the Baal-Shem-Tov's which Buber claims converted him into a disciple of the Baal-Shem's. It was the statement that man should seize the quality of eagerness with might that he may be hallowed and become worthy to beget and so be like the Holy One Who begat worlds. In this statement the Baal-Shem connects the quality of eagerness, of fervor, with holiness. If man if to fulfil God's commandment to the people of Israel—"You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy," he must act with fervor.[3] Here is Buber's

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[1]Buber, "The Dress That Did Not Fit," The Later Masters, pp. 162f.

[2]Buber, "Humility No Commandment," The Early Masters, p. 144.

[3]Lev. 19:2.

version of passion, of the "passionate inwardness," and the "infinite passion" described by Kierkegaard. It is also the basis for Buber's affirmation that the man who hates is nearer to the "I-Thou" relation than is the man who is merely indifferent to the other, who treats him as an object.

The wholeness of being with which man must act to perform his divinely appointed task of raising the sparks, thereby participating in the redemption of the world, involves man's emotions as well as his intellect. In part this quality represented a reaction against what the hasidic leaders regarded as the sterile intellectualism of the rabbinic Judaism of their day. The most meaningful statement Buber quotes with regard to fervor is one in which this virtue is affirmed in ultimate terms. He claims that it is not simply a joyous emotion directed towards things earthly, but a necessary part of man's wholeness and, therefore, it is necessary to man's redemptive activity.

> If a man has fulfilled all the commandments, he is admitted to the Garden of Eden, even though he has not burned with fervor and has not experienced delight. But since he has felt no delight on earth, he feels none there either. Finally he even grumbles: "and they make all that to-do about paradise!" And hardly have the words left his lips, when he is thrown out![1]

The Hasidim expressed the quality of fervor through song and dance and there are two stories which well illustrate the power of the ecstasy which burned through their bodies.

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[1]"Joyless Virtue," Ten Rungs, p. 44; see also, The Legend of the Baal-Shem, p. 17.

The first tells of a youth (one who was later to be a zaddik) who stamped upon the floor with both feet when he danced in the house of his master.

> . . .one foot was lame. Once when the zaddik's wife had watched him pray, she went to her husband and said: "What a heartless person you are! Why do you let him pound the floor with his bad foot? Tell him to use only his good foot."
> "I could do that right enough," answered the zaddik, "if, in praying, he knew every time whether he was using his good or his bad foot."[1]

In the other hasidic tale, the soteriological power of the quality of fervor is made quite explicit. It is told by a rabbi whose grandfather was a disciple of the Baal-Shem-Tov, when he himself was asked to tell a story.

> "My grandfather was lame. Once they asked him to tell a story about his teacher. And he related how the holy Baal Shem used to hop and dance while he prayed. My grandfather rose as he spoke, and he was so swept away by his story that he himself began to hop and dance to show how the master had done. From that hour on he was cured of his lameness. That's the way to tell a story!"[2]

We have seen that Buber's dialogic thought emphasizes the "every day" quality of the "I-Thou" encounters. He rejects all esoteric views of religion which would make religion an other-worldly affair which can only be experienced apart from the routine of life: ". . .I have given up the 'religious' which is nothing but the exception, extraction, exaltation, ecstasy; or it has given me up. I possess nothing but the everyday out of which I am never taken."[3]

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[1]Buber, "His Bad Foot," The Later Masters, p. 208.

[2]Buber, The Early Masters, pp. v-vi.

[3]"Dialogue," Between Man and Man, p. 14.

The emphasis on the holy ecstasy of the quality of fervor might seem to contradict this attitude, but in Buber's view it does not do so: "To the man in ecstasy the habitual is eternally new."[1] To illustrate this viewpoint Buber quotes two sayings of a great zaddik. The first one was occasioned by his view of a dawn: "'A few hours ago it was night and now it is day—God brings up the day!' and he was full of fear and trembling."[2] On another occasion this same zaddik said:

> "Every creature should be ashamed before the Creator: were he perfect, as he was destined to be, then he would be astonished and awakened and inflamed because of the renewal of the creature at each time and in each moment."[3]

This is the true fervor—to experience the quality of renewal amidst the routine of life, or, as the Baal-Shem puts it—"to rise eagerly from sleep."

Writings against Legalism

Intention.—Orthodox Judaism is often criticized for being legalistic, that is, for holding that the individual Jew can achieve salvation through external conformity to the Mosaic Law as it has been elaborately defined and refined by the talmudic tradition. Buber has himself criticized orthodoxy for its

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[1] The Legend of the Baal-Shem, p. 18.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

excessive rigidity towards the dynamic elements in life and history.

He has criticized the orthodox for having frozen the Torah, for making an absolute and static codified law out of the Torah which was originally an expression of Jewish creativity. In his view, ancient Jewish leaders forged the Torah with great passion because they regarded it as an instrument which would prepare Israel for its great mission—to lead the nations of the earth on the road to the hallowing.[1] Of course, Buber regards this freezing of the Torah into legalistic patterns as a degeneration from the vital dialogic character of true Judaism. In his view, Hasidism represented a renewal of Jewish vitality, and in its teachings he has found a rich vein of anti-legalistic insights which have interacted with his own existential leanings to produce his insistence on the need for creative responsiveness in the moral sphere, in opposition to any tendencies toward reducing life to formulae.

Buber says that the hebrew word torah is misunderstood when it is translated as law. He regards laws as being only a part of the Torah which in its broadest sense represents the interaction between God and man whereby God instructs man in His way in a series of vital "I-Thou" encounters. To translate torah as law is to objectivize the concept and make the Torah into a thing which men must deal with in "I-It" terms.

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[1]Martin Buber, "Der heilige Weg," Reden über das Judentum (2nd. ed., Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1932). pp. 181-185.

> It must not of course be overlooked that from the very beginning in Israel itself, with the existence of the Tables, all the more with that of a 'Book of the Covenant' and more than ever of a 'Holy Scripture', the tendency towards the objectivizing of the Torah increasingly gained ground.[1]

Buber claims that the insight into the true meaning of Torah as vital divine-human encounter had to struggle against the tendency to legalism in all phases of Jewish history. In every age the Jewish people have attempted to fix the divine law into rigid patterns which could be validly observed without the proper inner attitude.

> Indeed the constant danger of the form of faith which tends to the realization of a revealed divine will, is that the keeping of it can persist apart from the intended surrender to the divine will. . . .The beginnings of this process of making the gesture independent go back to the early times of the Sinai-religion. The struggle against it runs through the whole history of Israelite-Jewish faith.[2]

Buber develops this point in his interpretation of the myth of Cain and Abel, and of the legend of Abraham's "sacrifice of Isaac." Of the first, he says: "The offerings described appear, both of them, to have been objectively without blemish, yet YHVH does not regard Cain and his gift. We see from the story that the non-acceptance is due to the defective intention of the offerer."[3] Similarly he insists that the point of the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac was designed by the narrator to tell the people, and especially the king and the rulers, that he who makes one offering after the

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[1] Buber, Two Types of Faith, p. 57.

[2] Ibid., p. 58.

[3] The Prophetic Faith, pp. 90f.

other at the altar of God without the intention of offering himself to God, without the offering being a true representation of his inner attitude, offends God.[1]

Buber insists that God's will cannot be fulfilled without the proper inner intention. One of the most impressive hasidic tales, which Buber presents in illustration of this point, mirrors the anti-legalistic attitude of the Synoptic Gospels. It begins when one of the greatest of the Zaddikim tells his chief disciple, Rabbi Bunam, to go on a journey with a number of other Hasidim; but he gives no reason for thus dispatching him. The hasidic group comes to an inn and are greeted with delight by the innkeeper because he respects their great piety:

> Rabbi Bunam sat down in the main room, while the others went in and out and asked all sorts of questions concerning the meat which was to be served to them: whether the animal was unblemished, what the butcher was like, and just how carefully the meat had been salted. At that a man dressed in rags spoke up. He had been sitting behind the stove and still had his staff in his hand. "O you hasidim," he said, "you make a big to-do about what you put into your mouths being clean, but you don't worry half as much about the purity of what comes out of your mouths!"
> Rabbi Bunam was about to reply, but the wayfarer had already disappeared—for this is Elijah's habit. Then the rabbi understood why his teacher had sent him on this journey.[2]

Perhaps the most trenchant of the anti-legalistic sayings which Buber has culled from Hasidism is one which implies that fixing the Torah into an unalterable law in the form of talmudic halachah[3] may be a form of idolatry, of

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[1] Ibid. pp. 91f.

[2] Buber, "Not What Goes in at the Mouth. . .", The Later Masters, p. 229.

[3] Literally, the paths, i. e. the paths by which the Jew is to walk. It refers to the authoritative legal definitions of the Talmud which were developed with great dialectical acumen.

absolutizing the relative.

> The disciples of the rabbi of Kotzk were once discussing why it is written: "Take heed to yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which He made with you, and make you a graven image, even in the likeness of any thing which the Lord thy God hath bidden thee," and not—as the meaning really demands—"which the Lord thy God has forbidden thee." The zaddik who had been listening joined in the discussion. "The Torah warns us," said he, "not to make a graven image of any thing the Lord our God has bidden us."[1]

From these stories, it should be clear that Kavanah, the holy intention to raise the sparks, the third of the hasidic virtues which Buber emphasizes, is necessary for an act to be a true fulfilment of God's will. Without the holy intention, without "passionate inwardness" no act is truly redemptive. "And this is the meaning and mission of Kavanah: that it is given to men to lift up the fallen and to free the imprisoned. Not only to wait, not only to watch for the Coming One: man can work toward the redemption of the world."[2] Buber tells one story which illustrates the biting irony which the hasidic masters could direct against pious acts performed with defective intention. In this case a reader in the congregation had grown hoarse, and when the rabbi asked him, "How is it that you are hoarse?" he answered, "Because I prayed before the pulpit."

> "Quite right," said the rabbi: "If one prays before the pulpit one grows hoarse, but if one prays before the living God, then one does not grow hoarse."[3]

In Buber's view, the teaching that a prescribed act of Torah is not properly performed unless it is performed with Kavanah, with the inner holy intention, is but an elaboration of a fundamental insight he finds expressed

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[1]Buber, "No Graven Image," The Later Masters, p. 279.

[2]Buber, The Legend of the Baal-Shem, p. 35.

[3]Buber, "The Hoarse Reader," The Early Masters, p. 214.

in the Talmud, where two of Judaism's greatest teachers insist that the scholar whose inwardness does not equal his outwardness is no scholar.[1] This question of inwardness is the question of motivation, and the talmudic equivalent of Kavanah is the Lishmah doctrine, which, Buber says, means that an act ought to be performed for the sake of the thing itself, and he then elaborates this idea:

> By this word there is expressed first of all the fact that man should learn the Torah for its own sake and not because of what it yields; he is to fulfill the commandment for its own sake and not for its advantageous consequences. . . .The only thing which matters is that everything should be done truly for God's sake, from love to Him and in love to Him.[2]

Buber tells a beautiful story which illustrates the way this motivation of Lishmah ought ideally to operate in the lives of men. The story tells how one of the Zaddikim went off to the house of study when he was a boy. It was the eve of a holiday, and on that night the other boys used to play a game of which his father disapproved, so he had to promise that he would stay only as long as it took a three penny candle to burn down. Yet he grew so absorbed in his studies that he stayed several hours.

> When he finally came home, his father beat him until the blood came.
> "And did you not tell your father that you were studying all the time?" they asked [him] when he told the story many years after.
> "I might have told him, of course," he answered. "And my father would have believed me, for he knew that I never lied, but is it right to use the greatness of the Torah to save one's own skin?"[3]

It is not only true that a prescribed act of Torah cannot be validly performed without Kavanah, without the proper inner intention, but even those

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[1] Two Types of Faith, p. 65.

[2] Ibid., pp. 92f. (my underlining).

[3] Buber, "Studying," The Early Masters, pp. 286f.

acts whose performance is specified with great detail in the legal sections of the Talmud may be altered in performance if the proper intention is present. As an example of this, we have the story of a businessman (who was later to become a great zaddik). Every year he used to save money from his business ventures in order to buy himself a citron, the fruit needed for celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles. One year he was absorbed with the thought of the beautiful fruit his money would purchase. . .

> Suddenly he saw a water vendor standing in the middle of the road and lamenting his horse which had collapsed. He left his carriage and gave the man all the money he had to buy himself another. "What does it matter?" he said to himself as he turned to go back home. "Everybody will say the blessing over the citron; I shall say mine over this horse!" But when he reached his house, he found a beautiful citron which friends in the meantime, had bought him as a gift.[1]

Another story was told in response to the criticism directed against the Hasidim because they did not pray at the set times. A zaddik answered by saying that soldiers must do everything on schedule in training but that in battle they forget what is prescribed and fight as the hour demands, and he added, "the hasidim are fighters."[2]

It would seem that Buber has been strongly influenced by these stories, because he refers to hasidic teaching as "a teaching which sets the winged 'How' of an act high above the codified 'What'. . ."[3] He comments favorably upon the teaching of a zaddik whose point, according to Buber, is that: "What can be learnt does not matter; what matters is the self-abandonment to that which is not known."[4] These statements are reminiscent of Kierkegaard's statements on the

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[1]Buber, "What Does it Matter," ibid., p. 163.

[2]Buber, "The Fight," The Later Masters, p. 317.

[3]"Spirit and Body," Hasidism, p. 73.

[4]Ibid., p. 82.

dichotomy between the subjective and the objective. After saying that: "the objective accent falls on WHAT is said, the subjective accent on HOW it is said," Kierkegaard concludes that: "It is the passion of the infinite that is the decisive factor and not its content, for its content is precisely itself. In this manner subjectivity and the subjective 'how' constitute the truth."[1]

In his strictures against legalism, Buber would seem to be taking the same position as does Kierkegaard. He declares that:

> . . .the Torah has assigned to man actions agreeable to God, in the doing of which he learns to direct his heart to Him. According to this purpose of the Torah the decisive significance and value does not lie in the bulk of these actions in themselves but in the direction of the heart in them and through them.[2]

Any position which sets the intention of an act above its content, is in danger of succumbing to antinomianism. It would certainly seem that Buber's thought leans in this direction. First we find him criticizing a legalism which would hold that acts of Torah can be performed validly without regard for the intention of the man who performs them. Then we have seen him maintain that if the intention of an act of Torah is valid a man may alter the halachic prescriptions. We shall now see that Buber goes still further and declares that the proper intention may transform any act into a sanctifying act. This last point is expressed in his treatment of the hasidic virtue of service, the last of those attributes of the whole man which have made a special impression upon him.

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[1] Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 181.

[2] Buber, Two Types of Faith, p. 64.

Service.—We have seen that man can encounter any being on earth or in heaven as his "Thou." We have also noted that any event can be a vessel for the "Word," a bearer of revelation, and with full consistency Buber also insists that any act can exemplify the fourth hasidic quality which he specially prizes, namely service. In Buber's anti-legalistic writings, he insists that there is no prescribed act which can be an act of service without having the proper inner intention. Now we find that he carries this line of thought one step further and insists that any act at all, whether prescribed by Torah or not, can be an act of service—a hallowing redemptive act—if it is performed with the holy intention. The acts which are redemptive can no more be confined to those acts prescribed by the **halachah** than, in Buber's dialogic view, revelatory encounters can be confined to those reported in the Bible. Buber is always concerned with the vitality of religion in the here and now. If an event could not possibly take place today he refuses to believe that it happened in biblical times.[1] For the same reason he insists that a true act of service is not something that can be performed only by the exceptional man in extraordinary times but that it must be an act capable of being performed by the ordinary man in the course of his every day affairs. Various hasidic tales pungently declare that a man must not seek to rid himself of every day cares in order to enter more fully into the domain of the religious. Of one of these concerns the Baal-Shem-Tov said:

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[1] Moses, pp. 116f.; see also, "The Man of Today," Israel and the World, pp. 96-102; and especially "Heaven and Earth," At the Turning, p. 49.

> "Imagine a man whose business hounds him through many streets and across the market-place the livelong day. He almost forgets that there is a Maker of the world. Only when the time for the Afternoon Prayer comes, does he remember: 'I must pray.' And then from the bottom of his heart, he heaves a sigh of regret that he has spent his day on vain and idle matters, and he runs into a by-street and stands there, and prays: God holds him dear, very dear and his prayer pierces the firmament."[1]

In another story, a zaddik speaks to a disciple who had asked God to give him his livelihood at the proper time without travail so that he might not be hindered in serving Him. And, said the zaddik, God's answer was: "'. . .that what God really wants of you is not study or prayer, but the sighs of your heart, which is breaking because the travail of gaining a livelihood hinders you in the service of God.'"[2]

In an article on the "Spirit and Body of the Hasidic Movement" Buber insists that Hasidism offered neither new doctrine nor new elements of doctrine. It simply revivified the Jewish tradition in terms of some of the central concepts of the Kabbalah. So too, it took over the Messianism of this movement, but at its best it resolutely avoided any of the magical practices which were designed to hurry the end. Rather, it ". . .subordinated itself to the steady working on the inner world through the hallowing of all acts; in the stillness the conception ripened of a timeless salvation, which the moment discloses; the decisive factor was no longer a predetermined act, but the consecration of all acts. . ."[3]

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[1]Buber, "The Busy Man's Prayer," The Early Masters, p. 69.

[2]Buber, "Out of Travail," ibid., p. 280; see also, "Suffering," The Later Masters, p. 60.

[3]Buber, "Spirit and Body," Hasidism, p. 70.

Buber retells a great many stories of the way in which his ethical models, the Zaddikim, engaged in their great acts of hallowing and helping. In one of them a zaddik was going to a celebration and noticed a coachman shivering in the cold. He told him to go in and get warm, but the coachman said that he couldn't leave his horses. The rabbi offered to watch them for a while and finally prevailed upon the coachman to accept his offer. Since the celebration was at the home of a most hospitable host, all who came could get as much food and drink as they wanted. The coachman soon forgot about his benefactor. Hours later when the guests came out they found the great zaddik standing beside the carriage moving his arms and stamping his feet.[1] The most beautiful of these tales is one which shows the special quality of tenderness that this zaddik brought to his acts of service.

> On the eve of the Day of Atonement, when the time had come to say Kol Nidre, all the hasidim were gathered together in the House of Prayer waiting for the rabbi. But time passed and he did not come. Then one of the women of the congregation said to herself: "I guess it will be quite a while before they begin, and I was in such a hurry and my child is alone in the house. I'll just run home and look after it to make sure that it hasn't awakened. I can be back in a few minutes."
> She ran home and listened at the door. Everything was quiet. Softly she turned the knob and put her head into the room— and there stood the rabbi holding her child in his arms. He had heard the child crying on his way to the House of Prayer, and had played with it and sung to it until it fell asleep.[2]

The best summary of this particular attitude toward service is found in a very brief statement by a hasid who was asked: "'What was most important to your teacher?' 'Whatever he happend to be doing at the moment' was the reply."[3]

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[1]Buber, "The Coachman," The Early Masters, p. 160; see also "At the Fair," The Later Masters, p. 86.

[2]Buber, "The Delay," ibid., p. 87.

[3]Buber, "Most Important," ibid., p. 173.

Buber regards this teaching of Hasidism, concerning the wholeness of life and the holy potential of all acts, as the other side of the Jewish teaching of the unity of God. We have seen that for Hasidism, "the profane" is a designation of the not yet sanctified, nothing is simply and irreparably profane.

> When the purified and sanctified man in purity and holiness takes food into himself, eating becomes a sacrifice, the table an altar, and man consecrates himself to the Deity. At that point there is no longer a gulf between the natural and the sacral. . .at that point the natural event itself become a sacrament.[1]

Buber tells two stories which illustrate this point. They both deal with the theme of the holy but naive man who performs a simple, natural act in doing so shakes the heavens. In the one case a little boy who cannot read the prayer book blows his whistle during communal prayer in order to show his devotion to God and, by means of that act, helps the Baal-Shem himself to pray more fervently. In the other the whistling, which produces the same powerful effect, is done by Rabbi Zusya the most saint-like and naive of the Zaddikim, because he can find no other way of expressing his deep love of God.[2] Both stories are reminiscent of the many tales of the great acts of the naively pure of heart which are found in so many other religious traditions, for example, in the story of the "Juggler of Our Lady," who juggled before the image of the Blessed Virgin because it was the only way in which he could express his devotion to her.

Thus it is clear that there is no one way of serving God, and that His service cannot be limited to certain prescribed acts that are halachically defined. One zaddik made this point to two Hasidim who came to him after

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[1] Buber, "The Two Foci," Israel and the World, p. 34.

[2] Buber, "The Little Whistle," The Early Masters, pp. 69f.; "Zusya's Devotion," ibid., p. 246.

their own leader died. They were shocked to find that he deviated from the practices of their master, and decided to leave. A little later he spoke to them: "'A God whom one could serve only in one set way—what kind of God would that be!' They bowed before him and became his disciples."[1]

Hasidism insisted that each man must respond to God in terms of his own unique capacities. The individuality and irreplaceability of every human soul is a basic teaching of Hasidism.[2] Therefore, there can be no set way, no set acts, no set times. The Hasidim, we have seen, are fighters and they must respond to the fulness of the hour here on this earth. That is why Buber's ethic may most properly be called an ethic of responsibility Buber's best statement of this ethic in hasidic terms occurs in his introduction to these Tales of the Hasidim which are so useful in illustrating his ethical emphases:

> The world in which you live, just as it is and not otherwise, affords you that association with God, which will redeem you and whatever divine aspect of the world you have been entrusted with. And your own character, the very qualities which make you what you are, constitutes your special approach to God, your special potential use for Him.[3]

One zaddik made this very point when he said: "David could compose the psalms, and what can I do? I can recite the psalms.'"[4] The saintly Rabbi Zusya made this point still more pungently:

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[1]Buber, "In Many Ways," ibid., p. 313.

[2]Buber, "Love of One's Neighbor," Hasidism, pp. 178f.

[3]Buber, The Early Masters, p. 4.

[4]Buber, "Each His Own," The Later Masters, p. 147.

> Before his death, Rabbi Zusya said "In the coming world, they will not ask me: 'Why were you not Moses?' They will ask me: 'Why were you not Zusya?'"

This uniqueness of each human person is vital to Buber's dialogic philosophy. In a recent amplification of I and Thou, he insists that men will not engage in full dialogic encounter with each other, in the encounter in which the other becomes fully present, until each man learns to affirm the other in his wholeness, unity and uniqueness.[2] Each man, said a zaddik, should carefully observe the way that his heart draws him to, be it prayer or fasting, teachings or eating, and then choose this way with all his strength.[3] It is each unique act of service performed with fervor and with the holy intention of the man of humility that enables man to help God in the redemption of the world.

We have seen that Buber has emphatically rejected religion which is esoteric and withdrawn from life in the name of the religion of the every day. This religion receives its ethical expression in responsiveness to the demands of the moment, as this was illustrated by the zaddik who stopped to comfort a crying child when he was on the way to recite the most important prayer in the Jewish liturgy.

> I know no fulness but each mortal hour's fulness of claim and responsibility. Though far from being equal to it, yet I know that in the claim I am claimed and may respond in responsibility, and know who speaks and demands a response.[4]

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[1] Buber, "The Query of Queries," The Early Masters, p. 251.

[2] Buber, "Zwischenmenschlichen," dialogische Prinzip, pp. 268-273.

[3] Buber, "The Way," The Early Masters, p. 313.

[4] Buber, "Dialogue," Between Man and Man, p. 14.

Buber demands that the idea of responsibility be brought back from the province of specialized ethics into the concrete domain of lived life. One is responsible for the glance of a dog that looks at one, the hand of a child that clutches at one, the needs of the hosts of men that move about one. "Genuine responsibility exists only where there is real responding."[1] Buber means where there is real responding to all beings that stand concretely bodied over against one. The ethical is valid only in terms of the fulness of the dialogic relation. If you ask how are we to determine just what it is that constitutes a real response, Buber's answer must be: see the men who have gone before you, particularly the Zaddikim; see how they have responded. As has been previously asserted, this is Buber's implicit criterion for the life of faith.

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[1] Ibid., p. 16.

CHAPTER X

RELIGION AND ETHICS

Buber and Antinomianism

The remarkable overall consistency of Buber's thought, remarkable because his thinking is so unsystematic, evokes similar criticisms of all of its phases. Therefore, we find that Buber's ethic of responsibility is criticized as being too subjective, too much involved in the existential predicament, even as was his dialogic theory of knowledge. Once again the demand for objective criteria is raised; once again we find Buber's capacity for communicating his existential insights challenged, and here the question is more acute, because, as Franz Rosenzweig insists, deed as well as teaching is involved.[1] Because the challenge to Buber's ethical "subjectivism" has been most forcefully posited by those who criticize his treatment of halachah, the Jewish law, it would be best to introduce a treatment of his views on the relation between religion and ethics by dealing with a discussion of this challenge.

Buber bases his ethic upon the Jewish tradition, and this tradition, insofar as post-biblical Judaism is concerned, has until recent times been unified by the halachah, the legally defined precepts of Mosaic observance. Therefore, when Buber excerpts those aspects of hasidic teaching which emphasize "the winged how" of an act above "the codified what," when he declares that the

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[1] Franz Rosenzweig, "The Builders," On Jewish Learning, pp. 88ff.

purpose of the Torah does not lie in the prescribed actions themselves, but in the direction of the heart in and through them, and that the decisive factor in man's redemptive role is not the predetermined act but the hallowing of all acts, he is apparently flying in the face of centuries of Jewish tradition in the name of that same Jewish tradition. This naturally evokes sharp criticism, and some critics declare that Buber misses the need for and the point of the halachah.[1]

All these criticisms really address themselves to the existential predicament as this predicament is seen within the context of Judaism. All acknowledge the fact that Buber's emphasis on creative responsibility in ethical action and upon the inner direction of the heart produces an ethic which is vital and dynamic, but they do not see how his ethical thinking can escape subjectivism unless he provides objective criteria determining which acts are right in terms of content. Surely, they say, the proper intention is not enough. From the Jewish standpoint it seems clear to Buber's critics that it is the halachah which provides the objective content to which one must respond with the proper inner attitude. Arthur A. Cohen, in his reflections on Buber's view of halachah, claims that Buber confines God to the "I-eternal Thou" encounter by making God a reality for man only in the full presence of the encounter, and by restricting the content of revelation to the meaning which man experiences in the encounter. He feels that Buber over-emphasizes man's part in the process of revelation; the heart of his criticism of Buber's view of halachah is expressed in the following terms:

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[1]Arthur A. Cohen, "Revelation and Law, Reflections on Martin Buber's View of Halakah," Judaism, I (July, 1952), 250-256; Agus, op.cit., pp. 269-279; Jacob Taubes, "The Issue between Judaism and Christianity, Facing up to the Unresolvable Difference," Commentary, XVI (December, 1953), 529f; Jacob Rosenheim, Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Ansprachen, Vol. I (Frankfurt A. M.: J. Kaufmann Verlag, 1930), pp. 62-67.

> Inwardness without the Law of God, sanctification without the benediction, is the forsaking of eternity for the vulnerable fortress of time. The crisis of Halakah is met in the tension of time and eternity, of history and messianic redemption. Since all man knows of God is what God has spoken and what man believes, it is only too easy to draw God out of eternity and into time, to make of God the Thou before the struggling I, to abolish the objective word in the attempt to appropriate it as one's own.[1]

Cohen would have the halachah as an objectively revealed word of God standing above all man's encounters with Him as the eternal "Thou." Inwardness would enter in the act of appropriation, but the content and authority of the Law would be established independently of this act of appropriation. Thus would Cohen protect God from being drawn out of eternity and into time by Buber's dialogic, purely relational view of revelation and ethics, which is always in danger of becoming antinomian.

Buber himself has explicitly disavowed antinomianism in a number of his writings but especially in his treatment of Korah's rebellion in his book on Moses. He treats this rebellion against the authority of Moses as but one instance of rebellions against the chiefs or shamans which characterize the life of primitive tribes. In these rebellions, the ones who protest desire to actualize the god-might within themselves in a way that is free of all restrictions. When this movement is manifested at higher levels of religious development, Buber calls it antinomianism. It always rebels against "divine law" in the name of "divine freedom." Buber analyzes this movement in a way which would seem to forestall the very possibility of his being charged with antinomianism, to forestall it once and for all. Speaking of those men who have been gripped by God's spirit, Buber says:

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[1] Cohen, "Revelation and Law," op. cit., p. 255. (my underlining).

> If their authority as the chosen ones is disputed and extended to all, then the actual dominion is taken away from God; for without law, that is, without any clear-cut and transmissable line of demarcation between that which is pleasing to God and that which is displeasing to Him, there can be no historical continuity of divine rule upon earth.[1]

This rejection of antinomianism on Buber's part is not confined to his treatment of Korah's rebellion. It is reiterated in all his writings on Messianism. Again and again he warns of the danger of regarding redemption as in some sense completed, for then men take the attitude that all actions are thereby legitimate. He regards this as the great crime of Sabbatian Messianism, and sees it as a great danger of Christianity. He devoted a long article on "The Beginnings of Hasidism" to showing the sense in which the hasidic movement rescued Judaism from the utterly destructive antinomianism that Sabbatian Messianism had unleashed in the person of Jacob Frank.[2]

Buber sees antinomianism as a great heresy of Judaism, and of any other religion which may succumb to it. He does not regard the great protest movements of Judaism as being antinomian. For example, he sees the prophetic protest as one which is directed not against the cult itself, but against cultic practices emptied of intention. "It was against ritual works emptied of the intention of faith that the prophets fought."[3] Buber regards the complete rejection of the law in antinomianism as an abberation from the true Jewish spirit, and this abberation is one to which Christianity is peculiarly susceptable because Christianity focuses upon the individual man of faith rather than addressing itself to a people in all the complexity of their corporate

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[1] Moses, pp. 187f. (my underlining)

[2] Buber, Hasidism, pp. 1-33; see also, "Spinoza," ibid., pp. 112-116; "The Two Foci," Israel and the World, pp. 33ff.

[3] Buber, "Religion and Ethics," Eclipse of God," p. 140.

existence as does Judaism. In Diaspora Judaism, prayer and the other acts of Torah take the place of the cult of animal sacrifice. Just as Buber claims that the prophets directed their protest against cultic practice emptied of intention, rather than against the cult itself, so too he sees Hasidism's protest as directed against acts of Torah emptied of intention, and not against talmudic observance as such.[1]

All of these points are made by Maurice Friedman in his defense of Buber's view of revelation and law against Arthur Cohen's criticisms.[2] Once again, if the only issue at stake were Buber's writings, and their intention, one could readily agree with Dr. Friedman's views. He is certainly correct in asserting that one must not identify the "I-eternal Thou" encounter with the subjective facet of revelation and then look for an objective counterpart of the relation. Our study has amply demonstrated the fact that Buber regards the dialogic encounter between God and man as one which stands in an ontological dimension beyond subjectivity and objectivity.[3] Revelation takes place not in man's subjectivity but "between" God and man. Friedman adds that:

> Another not infrequent misunderstanding of Buber's attitude toward the law is the belief that it is in reality a form of antinomianism. Buber is himself aware of the danger that his teaching, like any other that stresses personal responsibility, will be misused by irresponsible people as a justification of their irresponsibility. Here, as in the rest of his thought, Buber is pointing to the narrow ridge between the two abysses, and here as elsewhere those who think exclusively in terms of Either-Or find it very difficult to follow him.[4]

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[1] "The Two Foci," Israel and the World, pp. 33f.

[2] Maurice S. Friedman, "Revelation and Law in the Thought of Martin Buber," Judaism, III (Winter, 1954), 9-16; see also, The Life of Dialogue, pp. 263ff.

[3] Buber himself uses the term "dimension" as a figure of speech which is appropriate to the description of the "I-Thou" realm in his "Zwischenmenschlichen," dialogische Prinzip, p. 257.

[4] Friedman, "Revelation and Law," op. cit., pp. 16f.

Mr. Cohen may indeed have presented the "I-Thou" encounter in excessively subjective terms, but we have seen in our discussion of Buber's dialogic epistemology that there are sound reasons for this. To be sure, Buber wishes to point the way beyond the existential predicament, beyond subjectivism, but he does not present arguments which accomplish this purpose. Dr. Friedman continually accepts Buber's statements of purpose as accomplished facts supported by adequate philosophical argument. Therefore, critics may justifiably raise the question of whether Buber's dialogic attitude towards the law does not really imply an antinomian position despite his explicit disavowal of it. Many statements of Buber's, ignored by Dr. Friedman, would lend substance to the arguments of those who would charge him with antinomianism.

In one of the hasidic tales, a young man speaks to a zaddik and expresses his deep concern over his failure to read some of the portions of a scroll during a religious service:

> Later the rabbi said to his friends: "There's your superpious man! All he cares about is doing exactly what is prescribed. But he whose soul is directed toward doing the will of God within the commandment, and clings wholly to God's will, may very possibly fail to do something of what is prescribed, but it does not trouble him. For it is written: 'In thy love for her wilt thou err constantly.'"[1]

In I and Thou Buber proclaims a teaching that might well serve as a commentary to this tale: "This life [the dialogic one] may have fulfilled the law or broken it; both are continually necessary, that spirit may not die on earth."[2]

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[1] Buber, "Against Pious Thoughts," The Later Masters, p. 180.

[2] I and Thou, p. 42.

To be sure, Friedman may well claim that these quotations illustrate one side of the narrow ridge, while Buber's writings on Korah's rebellion and the Pauline antinomian tendency of Christianity represent the other side that supports the ridge. However, on this particular point Buber tends to fall off to the antinomian side of the narrow ridge, as a further examination of his attitudes toward halachah will demonstrate. Buber says that:

> . . .Hasidism had no impulse to tear out any part of the structure of traditional Law, for, according to hasidic teaching, nothing can exist which cannot be filled with intention, or whose intention cannot be discovered. But it also becomes clear how just by this the force of inertia secretly remained stronger than the moving and renewing force, and finally inside Hasidism itself necessarily overcame it; it is only the old story that in the world of men the shell ever prevails over the kernel.[1]

He adds that no teaching finds it so hard to preserve its pure strength as one which, like Hasidism, seeks to emphasize responsibility in the here and now rather than to accept a codified system of obligations.

Cohen defends the hasidic position towards the halachah which Buber here rejects. Mr. Cohen, like Hasidism, would accept the Torah as a given authoritatively revealed body of law and then set Judaism the task of infusing the observance of this law with holy intention. Buber cannot accept this resolution. As we have seen, he believes that it opens the door to the triumph of the kernel over the shell. It fails to take account of the element of truth in the antinomian rebellion. "The true argument of the rebellion is that in the world of the law what has been inspired always becomes emptied of the spirit, but that in this state it continues to maintain its claim of full

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[1]"Spirit and Body," Hasidism, pp. 72f.

inspiration. . ."[1]

Buber insists that the law must continually be renewed by the purifying fire of the spirit. It cannot be made into an objectivum which is known apart from the revelatory encounter.[2] In answer to the criticisms which Rosenzweig directed against his position on halachah in "The Builders," Buber points to a fundamental distinction between revelation or teachings on the one hand, and law or halachah on the other. Whereas he sees revelation in its true form as a dialogic category, he writes that:

> I do not believe that revelation is ever a formulation of law. It is only through man in his self-contradiction that revelation becomes legislation. This is the fact of man. I cannot admit the law transformed by man into the realm of my will, if I am to hold myself ready as well for the unmediated word of God directed to a specific hour of life.[3]

It is clear that Buber rejects law or halachah in the name of the spontaneity he regards as necessary to true responding—to responsibility. To be sure, he does not reject the law completely, but the criterion by which he would validate the law is intensely subjective. He writes Rosenzweig that ". . .for me, though man is a law-receiver, God is not a law-giver, and therefore the Law has no universal validity for me, but only a personal one. I accept, therefore, only what I think is being spoke to me. . ."[4]

Certainly, in the light of Buber's rigorous objection to any authentication of the halachah beyond that of the immediate encounter of the Jew with the

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[1] Buber, Moses, p. 188.

[2] Buber, Two Types of Faith, p. 57.

[3] Martin Buber, "Revelation and Law," trans. William Wolf, Appendix to Rosenzweig, On Jewish Learning, p. 111. (This Appendix consists of correspondence between Buber and Rosenzweig.)

[4] Ibid., p. 115.

eternal "Thou," Mr. Cohen's charge of subjectivism is relevant, even though he may not have done full justice to Buber's intention to avoid subjectivism. It is natural to be as much in sympathy with Buber's intention to walk the narrow ridge at this point as is Dr. Friedman; to agree with Buber when he says that the history of Hasidism, where the shell triumphed over the kernel, should serve as a warning to those who, like Mr. Cohen, would espouse its solution to the problem of halachah. Yet if Buber can raise the spectre of the history of Hasidism against those who would make the halachah into an objectivum to be dialogically appropriated by the individual Jew, then surely the spectre of post-enlightenment Jewish history may be raised against Buber by his critics. One may not feel qualified to propose a solution to this vexing issue, and still insist that Buber does not stand on the narrow ridge simply by declaring his intention of doing so.

Buber sees quite clearly how vital the concept of separateness is to the divine charge to Israel at Sinai, at Israel's birth event, that Israel be a holy people. He does not show us how the people can remain separate without an objective universally practiced halachah. Surely it was this halachah that preserved the integrity of Judaism throughout the centuries of exile up until the time of the enlightenment. This solution may have been fostered by historical factors whose disappearance renders it irrelevant to the present. But Bubers conception of the halachah as something which must be validated by direct address to given individuals in dialogic encounters is certainly inadequate. It leads to just the kind of communal breakdown that has characterized post-emancipation Jewry. Buber tacitly admits this in his discussion of his dialogic view of the law.

> . . .I cannot accept the laws and statutes blindly, but I must ask myself again and again: Is this particular law addressed to me and rightly so? So that at one time I may include myself in this Israel which is addressed, but at times, many times, I cannot. And if there is any thing that I can call without reservation a Mitzvah [positive commandment of Mosaic Law] within my own sphere, it is just this act that I do.[1]

You simply cannot structure a community on the basis of the "I-Thou" encounters which, we have noted, Buber calls the "butterfly" which emerges from the "chrysallis" of the "I-It."[2] If law is to structure a community, all the individuals comprising it must feel themselves bound by the law at all times, even when they are working to alter it.

Yet this attitude toward the law is so deeply rooted in Buber's being that considerations of this kind are not apt to change it. Years ago he wrote Rosenzweig: "It is part of my being that I cannot accept both [the Law and the word of God] together and I cannot imagine that this position will ever change for me."[3] The words were prophetic. It is more than thirty years since he wrote them and his position has not changed.

It is conceivable that Buber could accomplish the tour de force of completely incorporating halachah within the "Thou" realm—thereby avoiding the dangers of both antinomianism and a codifying legalism. However, to convince us of the validity of such a procedure he would have to provide a clearer statement of his views on the law, showing why Rosenzweig's resolution of the problem fails to achieve this purpose and why his would. As matters stand at present, Buber's views on the problem of Jewish law still demonstrate

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[1] Ibid., p. 114.

[2] I and Thou, p. 17.

[3] Buber, "Revelation and Law," On Jewish Learning, pp. 111f.

the cogency of Rosenzweig's reflections on the collected edition of Buber's speeches on Judaism which had been delivered over a period of years spanning the second decade of this century:

> In the earlier lectures, the problem of Jewish law and practice is broached really only for the sake of completeness. In the final two we feel that it has gained in urgency . . . .But while the problem of teachings has heretofore gone through a visible development which has posed the question fully ripened at the precise moment of the answer, the question of the Law would seem in 1919 to be formulated much as it was in 1909.[1]

The situation has not changed since 1919. Although Buber's criticism of the devastating effect of halachah sundered from the revelatory encounter remains valid, through the years Buber has not shown us how halachah can be more creatively related to the structuring of community. His concept of a dialogic halachah remains self-contradictory.

The unsatisfactory character of Buber's statements on halachah accounts in part for his failure to exert a wider influence on the contemporary Jewish scene, particularly in America where questions of observance are of central importance.

Buber Rejects the Suspension of the Ethical

Buber says that his initial impulse toward reflection upon the general question of the relation between religion and ethics (apart from their relation in the context of Judaism where the question emerges in terms

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[1] Rosenzweig, "The Builders," On Jewish Learning, p. 74.

of the relation between revelation and halachah), came from his reading of Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling as a young man.[1] Through the example of God's testing of Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac his son, this work presents the notion of the teleological suspension of the ethical, that is, it insists that the most clearly defined moral obligation may at times be suspended by God's command. In the biblical story, filicide is temporarily permissible, that is, the ethical is temporarily suspended, because of God's direct "Word" to Abraham. "In the place of the universal and the universally valid steps something which is founded exclusively in the personal relation between God and 'the Single One.'"[2] Since duty for Kierkegaard is ultimately valid only in relation to God's will, only in relation to the one true Absolute, then the ethical as the universally valid cannot be ultimate; it is made penultimately valid.

Buber uncompromisingly rejects this position. He claims that Kierkegaard misunderstood the biblical tale. In preparing to sacrifice Isaac Abraham could be certain that it was God who spoke to him because he recognized the voice as the same one which once bade him leave the land of his fathers. The story does not justify any antinomian suspension of the ethical since, after all, God did not allow Abraham to perform the sacrifice, he merely tested the full intention of his faith. Its point is to teach us that we must,

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[1]Soren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, A Dialectical Lyric, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945).

[2]Buber, "Suspension of Ethical," Eclipse of God, p. 149.

in a revelatory encounter, ascertain whether it is God's voice which speaks. If we fail to do so, says Buber, we will fall into the error of making any sacrifice, of family, friends, or of our integrity in order that the state, the party or some other idol (even if this idol be an ideal like equality or freedom) may be served. He feels that the attitude expressed by the teleological suspension of the ethical is one which leads to the notion that any means are valid if the end if good.[1]

Buber anticipates our next question, which is, how can the man of today know whether it is the true God or Moloch who speaks to him? His answer is unequivocal. Although Moloch does imitate the voice of God, we may be sure that in contrast to the sacrifice of integrity, and the other criminal acts which idols such as Moloch demand of man:

> . . .God Himself demands. . .of every man. . .nothing more than justice and love, and that he "walk humbly" with Him, with God (Micah 6:8)—in other words, not much more than the fundamental ethical.[2]

In the light of Buber's attitude toward halachah, this is surely an astounding answer. Here Buber talks of the "fundamental ethical," just as we found Rosenzweig and others speaking of the halachah. Although he speaks of it as addressing him dialogically, he employs it against Kierkegaard as an objective criterion that will test the validity of an existential encounter. This is another example of his invoking the pragmatic criterion of the example of Jewish leaders in an attempt to escape the existential predicament. In this context it might be stated as follows: the "fundamental ethical" is that which has been taught and exemplified by the great leaders of Judaism throughout the ages, and it has been taught and lived best by the prophets and the Zaddikim.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 154ff.

[2] Ibid., p. 153. (my underlining)

Yet, a great problem is presented by this criterion, as by all pragmatic criteria, namely, how does one determine one's standard of pragmatic validity? Here the question which arises is how does one determine which Jewish leaders to choose? It is easy to subscribe to Buber's choice of Micah's summary of the prophetic message, but there are other biblical leaders. Israeli terrorists could choose leaders from the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings and using them as examples could justify any acts of violence no matter how vicious or perverted they might be. This pragmatic criterion is after all one which is only implicit in Buber's thought, and is one which is applied with considerable latitude. For example, we have seen that although Buber has accepted so large a part of the teachings of the great Zaddikim, and expressed an almost reverent attitude towards the way in which they lived their message, he has utterly rejected their halachic position. Probably the reason for the inconsistency we have just observed in his application of this criterion, an inconsistency which finds him rejecting halachah as an objectivum, while he accepts the "fundamental ethical" as objective, is deeply personal. Buber finds that he can live as a Jew outside the framework of halachah, but he cannot live as a man without the standard of the "fundamental ethical."

In the light of the inconsistency between his attitude toward halachah and his attitude toward the "fundamental ethical," we are entitled to ask Buber whether God demands of all men that they practice justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with Him, or whether it may not be the case in his dialogic scheme this content of the idea of the "fundamental ethical" is not valid for those who have failed to encounter it—to experience it dialogically. It is all well and good for Buber to state that the suspension of the ethical leaves the door open

for those who would urge that evil acts be committed in the name of serving an ideal, but what can he offer in its place? In a recent work Buber has had occasion to reemphasize the fact that spontaneity, an unplottable quality, must permeate the dialogic dimension.[1] How then can Buber absolutely forbid acts of violence in the name of a good end? Surely, there is no room within the framework of his ethics of dialogic responsiveness for ethical absolutism as one encounters it in some forms of pacifisim. Men must as times be willing to accept the anxiety and guilt involved in committing actions which repel them morally if they are to live responsibly in the world, and in his essay on "Hebrew Humanism" Buber acknowledges the inevitability of those compromises which must be made to preserve the community of the world, though he pleads that the extent of the compromises be minimized.[2]

Buber's views on the suspension of the ethical provide a clear-cut application of his position on the relation between religion and ethics and constitute an excellent introduction to his detailed statements on this question.

Love and Ontology

The definition of theonomy.—Buber defines the term ethical in a way that assumes the fundamental error of all utilitarian ethics. He declares that the ethical is the determination of the right and wrong of actions in terms

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[1] "Zwischenmenschlichen," dialogische Prinzip, p. 282.

[2] "Hebrew Humanism," trans. Olga Marx, Israel and the World, pp. 246f.

of their intrinsic value or disvalue and without any concern for their utility to the individual or to society.[1] In defining the religious he presupposes the existence of the Absolute in whatever form it may confront the individual, and declares that "the religious" is the relation of the human person to the Absolute insofar as the person enters into and persists in the relation as a whole being.[2]

The ethical drives beyond itself to the religious because man cannot derive absoluteness from within his self or his society for the scale of values upon which he bases all the significant moral decisions of life. Only out of the personal relation with the Absolute, that is, only out of the religious, can this absoluteness arise.[3] Without it man's life is mired in ethical relativism, as was true in the age of the Sophists, and as is true in our own day.[4] There is also, a drive on the part of the religious toward the ethical, because the religious would penetrate the whole of man's life and affect his decisions and actions.[5]

Buber insists that the conventional way of treating the relation between them, whether one begins with either the ethical or the religious, is a false one since it presupposes a conflict between religion and ethics, the conflict between autonomy and heteronomy. By autonomy Buber means the doing of the good because it seems intrinsically good to the person. By

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[1] "Religion and Ethics," Eclipse of God, p. 125.

[2] Ibid., pp. 126f. [3] Ibid., p. 129.

[4] Ibid., pp. 132ff., 141-146.

[5] Ibid., pp. 128f.

heteronomy he means the doing of the good because it has been ordained by the gods. It is clear that the man who is oriented toward the ethical must accept the position of autonomy otherwise, in the name of divine authority, he may be coerced into committing acts which are repugnant to him as a reasoning moral being.[1]

Speaking conventionally, from the standpoint of the religious the central concern of man should be the attempt to fulfil God's will. Therefore, man should choose heteronomy, that is, the preponderance of the religious, as the way of overcoming the conflict.[2] Even within the circle of those who believe in a commanding and postulating God, the conflict between autonomy and heteronomy is mirrored in the conflict between those who would invoke the authority of tradition to invest both religious (cult and ritual) and moral commandments with absolutely secure authority, and those who seek to invest these acts with the genuine intention that arises from within.[3]

According to Buber, all of these positions are infested with a false sense of the ethical and the religious as two opposing domains which must somehow be joined. Even the attempt on the part of the believer in a commanding God to infuse his practice of the ethical commandments with feeling and desire is a false effort at relating the religious and the ethical because the possibility for a world-denying religious attitude which would sever the relation to God from the relation to men persists. Ethics is still regarded as something fundamentally separate from religion which must somehow be related to it.[4]

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[1] Buber, "Love of One's Neighbor," Hasidism, pp. 159f.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., pp. 161-164.

[4] Ibid., pp. 164f.

Hence Buber's refusal to regard the halachah as a universal objectivum that must be existentially appropriated, but rather he insists that on the highest level of the religious the conflict is overcome in a theonomy in which the religious bestows itself in such a way that the ethical freely apprehends it.

> It would be a fundamental misunderstanding of what I am saying if one assumed that I am unholding so-called moral heteronomy or external moral laws in opposition to so-called moral autonomy or self-imposed moral laws. Where the Absolute speaks in the reciprocal relationship, there are no longer such alternatives. . . . In theonomy the divine law seeks for your own, and true revelation reveals to you yourself.[1]

Paul Tillich has also proposed a theonomous resolution of the conflict between autonomy and heteronomy. According to his analysis, autonomy is obedience to the law of reason which the individual discovers within himself. Yet the individual is more than a bearer of rational law, he is a particular being, a self, conditioned by the circumstances of existence. The reason operating within him tries to shape the conditions of existence according to its laws, but in doing so it may estrange itself from its own depth, that is, it may fail to see that reason is grounded in being-itself which precedes reason, and determines the substantial conditions within which reason operates. Furthermore, reason operating autonomously within the framework of its own laws tries to make all of reality subject to the laws of "controlling" reason which cannot deal with the unique in man and in being. Hence, a period in which autonomous reason is dominant leads to a heteronomous reaction, in which some tradition or institution, representing the depths of reason, and a concern with the elements of unique being, which autonomy has neglected, tries to impose its authority upon the reason in an arbitrary and tyrannical way.[2] Yet, says Tillich, autonomy

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[1] Buber, "Religion and Ethics," Eclipse of God, pp. 129f.

[2] Tillich, Systematic Theology, pp. 83f.

ought not to be checked by heteronomy, but rather by theonomy. "Theonomy does not mean the acceptance of a divine law imposed on reason by a highest authority; it means autonomous reason united with its own depth."[1] Both the structural elements of reason and its unique ground in the personal being of the individual are united in theonomy. Since God is the law for both the structure and ground of reason.

Buber wishes to invest theonomy with the same ontological character which Tillich claims for it. However, he does not proceed in similar fashion through an analysis of reason and an examination of its relation to being, but rather through an analysis of love as the central concept of the religious sphere. The focal point for Buber's analysis of love is its manifestation in the religion of Israel, especially in Hasidism.

The love commandments and the doctrine of the sparks.—Buber describes the religion of Israel as a great attempt in the history of the spirit to bind the radical distinction between good and evil to the Absolute. Central to this attempt is the idea that the people must become holy as a people, and they are to become holy not good, which means that:

> . . .every moral demand is set forth as one that shall raise man, the human people, to the sphere where the ethical merges into the religious. . . .This is expressed with unsurpassable clarity in the reason given for the goal that is set: Israel shall become holy "for I am holy." The imitation of God by man, the "following in His way," can be fulfilled naturally only in those divine attributes [which are] turned towards the human ethos, in justice and love. . ."[2]

Yet, in another context, when Buber comments on the relation of justice and love, as the constitutive characteristics of Israel as a holy people he says that: "Of the two, however, love is the higher, the transcending principle.

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[1] Ibid., p. 85.

[2] Buber, "Religion and Ethics," Eclipse of God, p. 137.

This becomes unequivocally clear from the fact that man cannot be just to God; he can, however, and should, love God."[1] Later he again refers to love as the higher and decisive principle which alone can knit together the relationship to God and to man because it requires neither organizations nor institutions, but can be given effect at any time and at any place by either individuals or by communities. Thus while Israel was not able to actualize justice in the Diaspora, because of the lack of political autonomy, it was able to actualize love in the little communities of the Hasidim.[2]

It is a fundamental assumption of the hasidic community that there can be no love of God without love of man. Buber tells of a zaddik who asked a disciple: "If on walking in the morning one is forced to choose instantly between love of God and love of man which should one put first?" The disciple did not know and the zaddik answered that it is said in the Prayer Book that before reading the morning prayers one should recite the verse, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." "'The real love of God,'" said the zaddik, "'should begin with the love of men. And if someone should tell you that he has love of God but has no love of men, then know that he is lying.'"[3] Another zaddik has declared that "only he who learns to love men one by one reaches, in his relation to Heaven, God as the God of all the World."[4]

Love then is the transcendent principle upon which the relation between God and man is grounded, and the love of God cannot be separated from the love of man, indeed "the pedagogically decisive way is from 'below' 'upward,'" from love of man to love of God.[5] In all this we find a striking echo of the words

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[1] "The Silent Question," At the Turning, p. 37.

[2] Ibid., pp. 42f.

[3] Buber, "Love of One's Neighbor," Hasidism, p. 168.

[4] Ibid., p. 170. [5] Ibid.

of the author of the first Epistle of John: "If any man says, I love God, and hates his brother he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen."[1]

The love of man drives beyond itself to love of God; the ethical drives beyond itself to the religious. It is in Buber's interpretation of the two great love commandments that this idea is most clearly and completely developed. His interpretation of the intimate, inextricable bond between the commandment to love God, and the commandment to love thy neighbor as oneself, may well have been suggested to him by hasidic tales such as the one which follows:

> A merchant once came to [a zaddik] and complained of another merchant who had opened his shop right next door to him. "You seem to think," said the zaddik, "that it is your shop that supports you, and you are setting your heart upon it instead of on God who is your support. But perhaps you do not know where God lives? It is written: 'Love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord.' This means: 'you shall want for your neighbor what he needs, just as you do for yourself—and therein you will find the Lord.'"[2]

As Buber interprets the commandments, the two, that we love God and that we love our neighbor as ourselves, are really both contained in the second which emphasizes the inextricable relation between them. For Buber claims that the commandment should read, "Love to your neighbor [the construction is dative] as one like yourself." Speaking then of the phrase Lereachah kamochah, generally in his opinion mistranslated "your neighbor as yourself," Buber says:

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[1] I John 4:20.

[2] Buber, "Where to Find God," The Later Masters, p. 235.

> The word so translated refers neither to the degree nor the kind of love, as if a man should love others as much as himself or in such a way as himself. . .it means, equal to thyself, and this means: conduct thyself in such a way as if it concerned thyself. An attitude is meant and not a feeling. It does not say, one should love someone, but 'to someone.'[1]

But the complete commandment ends not with the phrase "as thyself," but with the phrase--"I am the Lord." In treating the neighbor with the concern of love, in treating him as a person like ourselves, we find God. "He who loves brings God and the world together."[2]

Thus far we have seen that Buber regards the highest stage of religion as one in which the distinction between the religious and the ethical has completely disappeared. He claims that the second love commandment teaches us that in the act of love man discovers his own true nature, his proper relation to the neighbor, and to God. This is the way Buber imparts content to his view of theonomy, and we must turn again to the doctrine of the sparks in order to see how he endows the concept with ontological status.

Buber speaks of a zaddik who invokes the doctrine of the sparks to explain why we must love even those who are wicked before God. The zaddik said that: "'The soul of every man is a divine particle from above. Even so you have to show pity to God when one holy spark of His has been trapped in a shell.'" Buber interprets this statement in the following terms:

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[1]Buber, Two Types of Faith, p. 69.

[2]"The Silent Question," At the Turning, pp. 43f.

> Herewith the decisive step has been taken. For as the primeval source of the Deity is linked up with all its soul-sparks which are dispersed throughout the world, so whatever we do to our fellow-men is bound up with what we do to God. The "ethical" acts are by virtue of their meaning and essence just as much religious acts as are the "religious" ones.[1]

If it were possible for Buber to validate his declaration that God demands of man not much more than the "fundamental ethical," it would have to be done on the basis of this understanding of the relation between the religious and the ethical. The validity of his position at this point hinges upon the success of his effort to establish an ontological basis for his theonomous views. This effort, which is grounded in his interpretation of the doctrine of the sparks, must now be evaluated.

The doctrine of the sparks presupposes man's independence of God; it assumes that man is God's partner in the redemption of the world. Buber says that man's independence of God, despite God's unlimited power and knowledge, is the great mystery of man's creation.[2] And in another context he adds that "man can choose God, and he can reject God. That man may fall implies that he may rise; that man has power to lead the world to perdition implies that he has power to lead the world to redemption."[3] We have seen that the means whereby man can lead the world to redemption is the raising of the sparks. Buber insists that this doctrine is not to be understood as a psychological one, just as he insisted that God cannot be understood as a psychological content of the soul without reference to a superpsychic Being to which the content of the soul corresponds.[4]

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[1] "Love of One's Neighbor," Hasidism, p. 171.

[2] "Religion and Ethics," Eclipse of God, p. 138.

[3] "Spinoza," Hasidism, p. 108.

[4] "Reply to C. G. Jung," Eclipse of God, pp. 172ff.

Buber describes the teaching of the Baal-Shem regarding "alien thoughts" as one which says that these thoughts, fantasies which divert men from concentrating in hours of prayer and study, are not to be rejected but are to be transformed into a part of the creative processes of life which are to be directed to God. We have seen that Buber regards this as a furthering of the talmudic view that God is to be served with the evil urge as well as with the good one. What is important for our present context is Buber's insistence that the Baal-Shem did not mean anything purely psychological by the term "alien thoughts"—they are a phenomenon that belongs to the cosmic sphere. In each "alien thought" there lies a spark which remains from the "Breaking of the Vessels." The spark yearns to be freed from the "dirty clothes" of the "alien thoughts" so that it may be reunited with its divine origin. The man who bends the creative power of the evil urge or the "alien thought" to the direction of God, that is, the man who transforms these thoughts into acts of service accomplished with holy intention thereby aids in the redemption of the world. Buber regards the attitude of love in which there is no distinction between the religious and the ethical as the central aspect of this holy intention.[1]

Buber claims that "what we describe as phantasy [that is, the alien thoughts] is no free play of the soul, but every time a real encounter with real elements of Being. . ." [2] He is concerned to maintain the superpsychic character of this action of the person in "raising the sparks" and restoring them to their divine grounds. His clearest statement of this point follows:

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[1]Buber, "The Foundation Stone," Hasidism, pp. 50f.

[2]Ibid., p. 51.

> The psychoanalysis of our day has again taken up the Hasidic view in the form of the theory of the "sublimation of the libido," according to which the stimuli can be diverted, and carried over into the realm of the spirit, therefore changing so to speak their form of energy. Everything here is limited to psychic events alone, while Hasidism teaches ever and again the actual contact with other essences. "Sublimation" takes place within man himself, the "raising of the spark" takes place between man and the world.[1]

It is presumably for this reason that Buber in I and Thou insists that love is not a matter of feelings, but of a metaphysical and metapsychical fact.[2]

In this treatment of the ontological character of theonomy as grounded in the principle of love, and in the relation of love to the doctrine of the sparks, Buber offers no more in the way of cognitive argument than he did in the context of his epistemology or of his views on revelation. Just as his refutation of Jung was really no more than a declaration that traditionally men have regarded God as a psychic concept to which a superpsychic Being corresponds, so now his rejection of psychologizing interpretations of the concept of the "raising of the sparks" is simply a declaration that he means "real encounters with real elements of being." Therefore, the same criticisms that have been made of his ontological efforts in other contexts must be directed against his attempt to endow his view of theonomy with ontological status.

Tillich attempts to analyze reason and to show thinkers—Pragmatists, Idealists, Logical Positivists, or what have you—that their thinking necessarily involves certain presuppositions regarding the relation of thought and being, necessarily involves ontology. He does this by attempting to deal in cognitive terms with the problems that beset philosophers within the framework of their

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[1] Ibid., pp. 54f.

[2] I and Thou, pp. 14, 45f.

disciple. Buber, on the other hand, again and again engages in declarative statements, e.g., that love is a metaphysical and metapsychical fact, without supporting them with cognitive argument.

Once again it must be urged that this comparison of Buber and Tillich is directed towards the contrast in their methods. It does not mean that one must accept Tillich's ontological demonstrations. The point is that the ontological elements in Buber's thinking consist of claims rather than arguments, and that as such they are philosophically inconclusive. Therefore, when dealing with Buber's attempt to establish an ontological ethic on a level beyond the split between religion and ethics, we must again recall the words of Arthur A. Cohen regarding Buber's understanding of encounter, which he says ". . .is always communicated in the language of encounter. Speaking thus, he can address only those who have already achieved the awareness he wishes to excite."[1]

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[1]Cohen, "Book Review of Eclipse of God," op. cit., p. 282.

CHAPTER XI

NOT LESS—BUT NOT MORE

Freedom—God Needs Man

In the course of this study, we have frequently noted that Buber regards Paulinism as a disease to which Christianity is periodically prone.[1] We have also discussed the great influence which Buber has exerted upon contemporary Protestant theology. This is most ironic since it is precisely those thinkers who are most Pauline that Buber has influenced to the greatest extent.[2] The sharpest difference between Buber and these thinkers occurs in their attitudes toward the power of the human will. We have already had occasion to consider this issue in the context of revelation. In the ethical setting, it emerges as the question of the extent to which man can through his own efforts fulfil his divinely appointed task.

As background to a discussion of Buber's estimate of man's ethical capacities we must once again consider the doctrine of the sparks, and contrast it with Kierkegaard's position on God's relation to man's ethical striving in history. Kierkegaard speaks scornfully of the man who, in attempting to fulfil God's will in the course of his actions within history, ". . .seeks slyly to

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[1] For clearest statement of this position, see Two Types of Faith, pp. 162-169.

[2] For examples of two Pauline thinkers acknowledging their debt to Buber, see H. Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1946,) p. x; and Reinhold Niebuhr, The Self and the Dramas of History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. ix.

slip the thought into his dealings with God, that God needs him just a little. But this is stupidity, for God needs no Man."[1] Buber, on the contrary, first presents the doctrine of the sparks and then says:

> Does that mean that God cannot redeem the world without man's help? It means that God wills not that he could do that. Has God need of man for his work? He wills to have need of man.[2]

Where Kierkegaard insists that God needs no man, Buber insists that God needs every man: "God wills to use man for the completion of His work of creation. This sentence gives the foundation of the Jewish doctrine of redemption."[3] Therefore, in I and Thou he is able to declare passionately that: "You know always in your heart that you need God more than everything; but do you not know too that God needs you—in the fulness of His eternity needs you?"[4]

This view constitutes a problem to all thinkers who emphasize the transcendent sovereignty of God as, for example, Kierkegaard, who after declaring that God needs no man, adds: "It would otherwise be a highly embarrassing thing to be a creator, if the result was that the creator came to depend upon the creature."[5] Buber recognizes this difficulty. But he insists that the doctrine of the sparks is not merely psychological but ontological, that God's dependence upon man for the redemption of the world is a dependence in reality and not in semblance only. He insists that man's independence of God involves an ultimate mystery: ". . .how it happens that something from out of His own world, be it a falling away or a returning to him, can come upon God, the All-mighty and All-knowing, that is the mystery which belongs to God,

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[1] Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 122. (my underlining).
[2] "Spinoza," Hasidism, p. 109. [3] Ibid. [4] I and Thou, p. 82.
[5] Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 122.

the Creator and Redeemer, not more mysterious than that he is. . ."[1]

Man is in reality and not in semblance an independent partner of God in the creation; God depends upon man to accomplish the redemption of the world by hallowing all of the creation through acts performed with holy intention. "In history as it actually unfolds itself before our eyes we see that God waits for man."[2] This idea is clearly expressed by one of the Zaddikim who was asked by his disciples why a certain portion of the Talmud, in commenting upon the verse "ye shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy," says, "my holiness is beyond your holiness." "'But who does not know this?'" they exclaimed, and then they asked, "'What do we learn through this?'"

> He expounded: "This is what is meant: My holiness which is the world, depends upon your holiness. As you sanctify my name below, so it is sanctified in the heights of Heaven. For it is written: 'Give ye strength unto God.'"[3]

Thus we have traced the unequivocal fashion with which this doctrine presupposes the freedom of man's will. This doctrine assumes that each man can not only bring about his own redemption through the power of his own will, but it also assumes that he can, by the effort of his will, contribute mightily to the redemption of the creation.

Buber's writings abound with eloquent statements of man's freedom and its absolute centrality for the ethical life. Many of these statements arise in connection with his interpretation of the prophetic mission. We have already

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[1]Buber, "Spinoza," Hasidism, pp. 109f; see also, "The Faith of Judaism," Israel and the World, p. 17; "Religion and Ethics, Eclipse of God, p. 140.

[2]Buber, "Spinoza," Hasidism, p. 109. (my underlining).

[3]Buber, "Sanctification of God," The Early Masters, p. 149; see also, "The Ladder," The Later Masters, p. 170; and "Speak unto the Children of Israel," ibid., p. 287.

considered Buber's statement that God does not endow His revealed word with power so that it is not possible, externally and objectively, to distinguish between the prophet who truly speaks the word of God and the false prophet who speaks words of fantasy from his own unconscious. God makes it hard for the believer—He does not endow His word with overriding power, and so He does not override man's freedom.[1] In similar fashion Buber analyzes the relation between God's will and man's freedom as the issue relates to the Ten Commandments. Buber says that the man who resists the commandments of the Decalogue can go about his business unimpeded despite the power of the God who issues these commandments.

> Though He who speaks the word has power (and the Decalogue presupposes that he has sufficient power to create the heavens and the earth) he has renounced this power of his sufficiently to let every individual actually decide for himself. . .whether he wants to choose or reject the I of "I am." He who rejects Him is not struck down by lightening; he who elects Him does not find hidden treasures. . . .Obviously God does not wish to dispense either medals or prison sentences.[2]

Buber rejects any historical determinism. While some interpreters of the prophets insist that the prophet preached his word knowing full well what the outcome would be, Buber emphatically denies this:

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[1] Buber, The Prophetic Faith, pp. 176f.

[2] "What Are We to Do about the Ten Commandments?", trans. Olga Marx, Israel and the World, p. 85.

> The essential task of the prophets of Israel was not to foretell an already determined future. . . .It was not announced what would happen under any circumstances, but what would happen if the hearers of the message realized God's will, and what would happen if they refused themselves to its realization.[1]

Buber uses what he calls "the paradigmatic Book of Jonah" to show that the prophets present man with a real alternative even when they do not appear to do so. For in this book Jonah is commanded to speak a word which pronounces unconditional catastrophe upon the people of Nineveh, yet the word contained a hidden alternative, for the people are driven into despair and in this state they turn to God and are saved.[2]

Whereas prophecy addressed its message to the people and demanded that Israel turn to God:

> The Hasidic teaching is the consummation of Judaism. And this is its message to all: <u>You yourself must begin</u>. Existence will remain meaningless for you if you yourself do not penetrate into it with active love and if you do not in this way discover its meaning for yourself. Everything is waiting to be hallowed by you. . . .For the sake of this your beginning, God created the world.[3]

The hasidic teaching focuses on the individual who must make the decision to turn to God. We shall now examine Buber's interpretation of this turning.

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[1] "Heaven and Earth," <u>At the Turning</u>, p. 54.

[2] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 54f.

[3] Buber, "The Silent Question, <u>ibid.</u>, p. 44.

Turning—Man Can Fulfil the Divine Demand

The fullest exposition of the concept of turning in Buber's thought is found in the context of his discussion of good and evil. He presents an analysis of man's nature which emphasizes the fact that man is the only living creature ". . .for whom the real is continually fringed by the possible."[1] A veritable vortex of possibilities swirls about the individual. Some of these can be actualized by him, but not all of them.

Buber claims that the Old Testament regards a man's failure to actualize his potential, the failure to become the unique person that God intends him to be, as evil, because the person who fails to make the actualizing decision is increasingly drawn away from reality and sucked into the vortex of a fantasy life in which he endlessly plays with possibilities.[2]

Buber has spoken of the sacrifice involved in bodying forth a work of art:

> The act includes a sacrifice and a risk. This is the sacrifice: the endless possibility that is offered upon the altar of the form. For everything which just this moment in play ran through the perspective must be obliterated; nothing of that may penetrate the work.[3]

So Buber now speaks of the process of decision, of choosing possibilities from the vortex, of imposing direction upon them by turning them to God, as ". . . a cruelly hazardous enterprise, this becoming whole, becoming a form, of

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[1] "Images," Good and Evil, p. 125.

[2] Ibid., p. 127.

[3] I and Thou, p. 10.

crystallization of the soul."[1] But he says that ". . .if the work meets with success, the soul has given up undirected plenitude in favour of one taut string, the one stretched beam of direction."[2] Many men, however, are unwilling to take the risk, and so Buber says that ". . .if there were a devil it would not be one who decided against God, but one who, in eternity, came to no decision."[3] Later he came to speak of radical evil as the final decision to persist in indecision—as the absolutizing of the failure to decide for God, a type of evil that he finds exemplified in Persian dualistic mythology.[4]

Buber's effort (one which should by now be familiar to the readers of this study) to endow his categories with ontological status, without developing adequate grounds for maintaining this claim, emerges in this context as well. He insists that the concept of the turning to God is ontological:

> It is usual to call it "repentence," but to do so is a misleading attempt to psychologize; it is better to take the word in its original, literal meaning. For what it refers to is not something which happens in the secret recesses of the soul, showing itself outwardly only in "consequences" and "effects"; it is something which happens in the immediacy of the reality between man and God.[5]

Buber then employs this understanding of the concept of turning to define the divine demand: "God expects from thee fulfilment according to thy nature and ability, He expects in the fulfilment, 'the direction of thy heart towards Him', not less, but also not more."[6] This theme is one which Buber emphasizes a great deal because he would reject any ethics which is

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[1] "Images," Good and Evil, p. 129.

[2] Ibid., p. 127.

[3] I and Thou, p. 52.

[4] Buber, "Images," Good and Evil, pp. 133-143.

[5] Buber, "The Faith of Judaism," Israel and the World, pp. 19f.

[6] Two Types of Faith, p. 79. (my underlining).

founded upon an irrelevant perfectionism. "For our God makes only one demand upon us. He does not expect a humanly unattainable completeness and perfection, but only the willingness to do as much as we possibly can at every single instant."[1] The key to Buber's optimistic estimate of man's capacity to fulfil the divine demand is provided by this statement that God demands of the individual "not less, but also not more" than he can accomplish.

Buber criticizes the doctrine of original sin, which plays so prominent a role in contemporary Protestant thought, quite sharply at just this point. Whereas Judaism, in his view, encourages man to do that which God requires of him, and that which he certainly is able to do, he says that "the dogma of original sin was not, indeed, adapted to further that especial connection of the ethical with the religious that true theonomy seeks to realize through the faithful autonomy of man."[2] The reason that Buber takes this attitude toward the dogma of original sin is that he mistakenly equates all interpretations of it with a fatalistic position which affirms that all men sinned in the fall of Adam, and that therefore all men are today necessarily and hereditarily sinners. In his view, Jewish doctrine regards sin as man's disturbing of his proper relation to God so that he is no longer the creature God intended him to be. Forgiveness is God's restoration of the proper relationship after man has turned to Him. "Turning, provided the individual exerts his whole soul to accomplish it, is not prevented by anything, not even the sin of the first men. . . .He sins as Adam sinned and not because Adam sinned."[3]

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[1] "Teaching and Deed," Israel and the World, pp. 140f.

[2] Buber, "Religion and Ethics," Eclipse of God, pp. 140f.

[3] Buber, Two Types of Faith, p. 158; see also, "The Faith of Judaism," Israel and the World, p. 17.

Buber will not tolerate any fatalistic doctrine which fails to do justice to the full dimension of man's freedom and responsibility in the world. This rejection of fatalism must surely strike a responsive chord in many readers, yet Buber does not seem to realize that man's freedom and responsibility can also be affirmed in terms of the Pauline emphases that he regards as a disease of Christian theology.

Reinhold Niebuhr claims that the classical Christian doctrine of original sin offends both rationalists and moralists by maintaining the seemingly absurd position that man sins inevitably and yet is responsible for his sins. However, Niebuhr insists that:

> The Christian doctrine of original sin with its seemingly contradictory assertions about the inevitability of sin and man's responsibility for sin is a dialectical truth which does justice to the fact that man's self-love and self- centredness is inevitable, but not in such a way as to fit into the category of natural necessity. It is within and by his freedom that man sins. The final paradox is that the discovery of the inevitability of sin is man's highest assertion of freedom.[1]

The final paradox, according to Niebuhr, holds true because man's recognition of the inevitability of sin chastens his pride and leads toward a restoration of the proper relation between God and man in which man recognizes his own creatureliness and Gods sovereignty, and so is helped in his efforts to overcome sin, especially the sin of injustice which is the moral dimension of it.

The power of Niebuhr's view of original sin, and the sense in which it can refute Buber's position that the doctrine inevitably leads to fatalism, appears not so much in Niebuhr's theoretical statements of the paradoxes involved,

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[1] The Nature and Destiny of Man, I, 263.

but in his profound applications of the doctrine in his many writings on social affairs. In all of these writings he continually asserts his conviction that this doctrine performs a dual, a dialectical function. By calling attention to man's inevitable sinfulness it teaches him that every level of human achievement is tainted with sin and corruption. On the other hand, by calling attention to his true nature as created in the image of God, it urges him to ever greater achievement. The fact that all of man's achievements in history, even the highest ones,are tainted with pride and self-interest, does not, in Niebuhr's view, constitute a reason for despairing of the possibilities for moral achievement in history. It is not an excuse for withdrawing from it, but, on the contrary, serves as a goad which urges man to improve upon his historical achievements.[1]

Certainly, Buber cannot properly object to Niebuhr's statement of the dogma of original sin on the grounds of its being fatalistic, for it is not. Nor can he properly object to it on the grounds of its being, as Niebuhr readily admits, extremely paradoxical. Buber's own position on man's freedom is quite paradoxical. When he has stated his conviction that man is an independent partner of God in the redemption of the world, so that God waits for man's action, he asks: "Does this mean that God has given away one particle of His power to determine the course of events?" and he answers that "we only ask that question, when we are busy subsuming God under our logical categories."[2] The difference

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[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, "The City Which Hath Foundations," Discerning the Signs of the Times, Sermons for Today and Tomorrow (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), pp. 73-93.

[2] "Spinoza," Hasidism, p. 108.

between Buber and a Pauline theologian like Niebuhr is not that Niebuhr is fatalistic where Buber is not, nor is it that Niebuhr is paradoxical where Buber is not; the difference is a difference in tone—Buber presents the paradoxes without the anguish.

We shall now examine some specific issues in which this difference is manifested.

"Patchwork"—
Freedom, Grace and Moralism

The great enemy of the dialogic life is overacute consciousness of and absorption with the self. A person in this condition necessarily deals with the other in terms of utility and "experience" and cannot encounter another as a "Thou" bodied over against the self. Buber's touching story of his childhood relation to a dapple grey horse well illustrates the danger of overacute self-consciousness to the mental state. He used to play with the horse every day and experienced "the immense otherness of the other"—the sense of "Thou"—in his stroking of its mighty mane, in his feeding it, and in the way it raised its head and snorted after he fed it. But once, Buber says:

> . . .it struck me about the stroking, what fun it gave me, and suddenly I became conscious of my hand. The game went on as before, but something had changed, it was no longer the same thing. And the next day, after giving him a rich feed, when I stroked my friend's head he did not raise his head.[1]

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[1]"Dialogue," Between Man and Man, p. 23.

In a recent work Buber has described the terrible predicament of modern men trying to converse with each other when their central preoccupation is not the dialogic communication which takes place when one man addresses another out of the depths of his being with genuine unreserve, but rather the impression they wish to make upon each other. Thus he describes two persons, Peter and Paul, who are engaged in fictive conversation and carry the following images into it: there is Peter as he would like to appear to Paul, and of course Paul's image of himself as he would appear to Peter; there is the image of Peter as he does in fact appear to Paul, and likewise the factual impression that Peter has of Paul, which latter images of course do not agree with the ones each desires to project; then there is the image which each of them has of himself and finally, there is the bodily Peter and the bodily Paul: "Two living beings and six forms of phantasy appearances which are variously mixed with the speech of the two of them. Where does room yet remain for the authenticity of that which is 'between man and man.'"[1]

There is a hasidic saying of one of the greatest of the Zaddikim, which clearly recognizes the sense in which overacute self-consciousness is destructive of genuine dialogic communication between man and God. The zaddik said to his disciples:

> "I shall teach you the best way to say Torah. You must cease to be aware yourselves. You must be nothing but an ear which hears what the universe of the world is constantly saying within you. The moment you start hearing what you yourself are saying, you must stop."[2]

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[1] "Zwischenmenschlichen," dialogische Prinzip, p. 265. (my translation).

[2] Buber, "How to Say Torah," The Early Masters, p. 107.

It is clear that Buber's analysis of prayer, as expressed in terms of the predicament of modern man in his praying, is in accord with this hasidic view of true prayer: "We call prayer in the pregnant sense of the term that speech of man to God which, whatever else is asked, ultimately asks for the manifestation of the divine Presence, for this Presence's becoming dialogically perceivable."[1] Buber claims that the single presupposition of a genuine state of prayer is readiness for the Presence, a willingness to genuinely turn toward the Other, toward God, in unreserved spontaneity, a spontaneity which can overcome all which disturbs and diverts. He knows that for modern man such unreserved spontaneity is exceedingly difficult:

> But in this our stage of subjectivized reflection not only the concentration of the one who prays, but also his spontaneity is assailed. The assilant is consciousness, the over-consciousness of this man here that he is praying, that he is praying, that he is praying. And the assailant appears to be invincible.[2]

This phenomenon which Buber describes is one all Existentialists take note of. Namely, that modern man is like a man standing between two mirrors so that behind every image he forms of himself there stands another; behind every level of his self-consciousness there stands yet another one; so that every affirmation on one level is countered by a challenge from another. Any spontaneous outgoing response to being is greeted by the challenge from a different level which asks for the ontological credentials of that other to whom the response is directed. To be sure, the problem is not one that has only recently asserted itself—men have experienced it throughout the ages—

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[1] "God and the Spirit of Man," trans. Maurice S. Friedman, Eclipse of God, p. 163.

[2] Ibid.

but it is far more acute in the modern setting because of those factors which we mentioned in our discussion of the existential "Revolt of the Concrete," namely, the success of science and the industrial revolution. Both have encouraged man to view himself in impersonal terms on the model of natural relations or mechanized ones, so that the peculiarly human aspects of life, particularly as these relate to religion and morality, became especially questionable.

Yet the struggle for unification and turning, the concern with salvation, are indeed age-old problems. We have already dealt with the question of the role which man plays in bringing about his own salvation, when we dealt with the Pelagian controversy in the context of Buber's views of revelation. Once again we maynote the striking overall consistency of his thought, for a similar pattern emerges when we consider the question in this ethical context. Buber will simply not brook any Kierkegaardian agonizing about the problem of the will and its role in man's salvation. Whereas Kierkegaard, and Pauline thinkers generally, lay great stress on Paul's words: "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do,"[1] Buber, as we have seen, insists that God demands of man "not less, but also not more" than he can do.

We have already observed that the Pauline theologians assert that the efforts of man to achieve salvation through conscious willing must fail because the will is itself sick. There is a hasidic tale which very well illustrates

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[1]Rom. 7:18-19.

Buber's attitude towards what he regards as an over-concern with the defectiveness of man's capacity to achieve salvation through the efforts of his will.

> A hasid of the rabbi of Lublin once fasted the one sabbath to the next. On Friday afternoon he began to suffer such cruel thirst that he thought he would die. He saw a well, went up to it, and prepared to drink. But instantly he realized that because of the one brief hour he had still to endure, he was about to destroy the work of the entire week. He did not drink and went away from the well. Then he was touched by a feeling of pride for having passed this difficult test. When he became aware of it, he said to himself: "Better I go and drink than let my heart fall prey to pride." He went back to the well, but just as he was going to bend down to draw water, he noticed that his thirst had disappeared. When the sabbath had begun, he entered his teacher's house. "Pathwork!" the rabbi called to him, as he crossed the threshold.[1]

Certainly Buber recognizes the difficulty involved in consciously willing to do the good, in the face of the consciousness and over-consciousness of the self. We have detailed his awareness of the predicament of modern man who is so strongly assailed by over-developed self-consciousness. Furthermore, in another hasidic tale he tells of a man who asked the help of a zaddik in breaking his evil impulses: "The rabbis eyes laughed as he looked at him: 'You want to break impulses? You will break your back and your hip, yet you will not break an impulse.'" Impulses are not subject to the control of the will. Yet there is another part to the rabbi's answer: "'But if you pray and learn and work in all seriousness, the evil in your impulses will vanish of itself.'"[2] However, the great problem for the man of today, the man beset

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[1] Buber, "Patchwork," The Early Masters, p. 316.

[2] Buber, "Breaking Impulses," The Later Masters, p. 60.

by "evil impulses" and "alien thoughts"—the man who sees himself "between the mirrors"—is that he cannot pray, learn, and work in all seriousness. Despite this, Buber has a tremendous confidence, a buoyant optimism regarding the way in which man's willing and God's response work together for the redemption of the creation. After stating that history is steeped in sin because of man's disturbing of the fundamental relationship between himself and God through countless generations, Buber adds his confident conviction that ". . .no one goes out in order to turn without grace coming to meet him. . ."[1] Here Buber is making the same mistake that was made by the zaddik who told the hasid to pray, study, and work in all seriousness—he is forgetting just how hard it is for modern man to turn and to pray. When John Dillenberger says that ". . .the willingness of decision is not enough . . . .Without decision faith cannot occur, but decision will not make faith,"[2] he is not indulging in "patchwork," but is describing a phenomenon of the life of the spirit familiar to many. Buber, as we have seen, is aware of the difficulty. We shall consider some of his statements upon grace and freedom which emphasize the paradoxical character of the redemptive relation between God and man, but, once again, the paradox is without anguish. Since Buber sees the dialogic life in the context of community—the community of Israel which has gathered about those Jewish leaders who have lived the dialogic life—the sting is taken out of man's predicament of finite freedom.

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[1] Two Types of Faith, p. 158.

[2] Dillenberger, op. cit., pp. 168f.

Buber presents many theoretical formulations of the problem of grace and freedom which are paradoxical in character, and which would serve as a refutation of A. Roy Eckardt's charge that he is a "voluntaristic Existentialist," by which Eckardt means to say that Buber's thought does not give the idea of grace its due.[1] In a lecture on "The Faith of Judaism" Buber explicitly repudiates the suggestion made by a Christian theologian that the doctrine of the sparks—with its strong emphasis upon man as an independent partner of God in the redemption of the world—is a conception to which grace is unknown: "We are not less serious about grace because we are serious about the human power of deciding, and through decision the soul finds a way which will lead it to grace."[2]

In another context Buber provides a fuller statement of the paradoxical way in which grace and freedom interact in all human action. Having provided a full statement of the teaching of the sparks, the doctrine by which Hasidism transforms Kabbalistic speculation into responsible human ethos, he says:

> . . .it is senseless to ask how far my action reaches, and where God's grace begins; there is no common border-line; what concerns me alone, before I bring something about, is my action, and what concerns me alone, when the action is successfully done, is God's grace. . . .man's action is enclosed in God's action, but it is still real action.[3]

Any Pauline theologian who takes original sin seriously could agree with this statement. Yet Buber himself does not seem to see its practical

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[1] A. Roy Eckardt, "Book Review of Good and Evil by Martin Buber," The Journal of Bible and Religion, XXII (January, 1954), 46-48.

[2] Buber, "The Faith of Judaism," Israel and the World, p. 18.

[3] Buber, "Spinoza," Hasidism, p. 110.

implications. For despite the paradoxical quality of his theoretical statements on grace and freedom—statements which preserve the tension between them—when he deals with the practical aspects of man's existence, man as a creature of decision and action, he seems to dissolve the tension, thus justifying Eckardt's characterization of his thought as an "existential voluntarism": "We are dependent on grace; but we do not do God's will when we take it upon ourselves to begin with grace instead of beginning with ourselves. Only our beginning, our having begun, poor as it is, leads us to grace."[1] Buber's clearest exposition of the relation between grace and freedom as man experiences it in the practical aspects of life is stated in the following terms:

> We have to be concerned, to be troubled, not about the other side but about our own side, not about grace but about will.[2]

Buber misunderstands the idea of grace, as it appears in religious, especially in Pauline, thought. He fails to understand the essential function of the concept of grace:

> God tenders me the situation to which I have to answer; but I have not to expect that he should tender me anything of my answer. Certainly in my answering I am given into the power of his grace, but I cannot measure heaven's share in it, and <u>even the most blissful sense of grace can deceive</u>.[3]

As the idea of grace appears in the writings of a Pauline theologian like Reinhold Niebuhr it is indeed blissful in its ultimate import, for ultimately it conveys a sense of meaning, purpose, and redemption. However, penultimately it serves an entirely different function. It serves to remind the individual,

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[1] Buber, "The Two Foci," <u>Israel and the World</u>, pp. 32f.

[2] <u>I and Thou</u>, p. 76.

[3] "The Question to the Single One," <u>Between Man and Man</u>, p. 69. (my underlining).

even after he has entered into a vital relation with God, that such virtue as he possesses is a virtue not his own. When Bunyan, seeing a drunk wallowing in the gutter, said "There but for the grace of God goes John Bunyan," he was amply affirming this insight, for without the aid of God, without proper heredity and environment, Bunyan, had he been subjected to the same vagaries of fortune as was this drunk, might also have attempted to take that way out. Niebuhr would in no way deny man's responsibility in his doctrine of grace, any more than he would deny it in his paradoxically developed view of sin. He affirms both that man is responsible for acting as virtuously as possible, and that he is nevertheless not to pride himself upon such virtue as he attains, but is to recognize in humility that without the grace of God he could not have attained it.[1]

It is ironical that Buber should be so critical of Pauline thought on this point, because as we have observed, he himself appreciates the twofold practical import of such paradoxical religious affirmations as the immanence and transcendence of God, or the fear and love of God. The irony is compounded when we note that Buber has quoted a hasidic saying which perfectly illustrates the twofold practical import of Niebuhr's treatment of grace and freedom:

> Everyone must have two pockets, so that he can reach into one or the other, according to his needs. In his right pocket are to be the words: "For my sake was the world created," and in his left: "I am dust and ashes."[2]

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[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, II, Human Destiny, pp. 114ff.

[2] Buber, "Two Pockets," Ten Rungs, p. 106.

Niebuhr's exposition of the relation between grace and freedom urges men to accept the responsibility which their freedom imposes upon them, and it seeks to destroy the basis of any self-righteous moralism on the part of the man who does succeed in fulfilling a considerable measure of this responsibility. His understanding of original sin supplements this fight against pride of virtue, that is, against self-righteousness. For as the doctrine of grace reminds the individual that his grace and virtue is not his own, so too, the doctrine of original sin reminds the individual that the highest level of virtue he attains is still corrupted by sin, by inordinate self-love and self-interest. This is surely a far more somber and, if you will, anguished view of the human situation than Buber's and certainly the sense of grace is not blissful (except in the ultimate sense already mentioned).

Because Buber so often loses the paradoxical tension involved in the issue of grace and freedom, he is always in danger of lapsing into moralism. It is a great tribute to the religious profoundity of his thought that he so rarely does so—despite his deprecation of the practical implications of grace. Yet his treatment of the distinction between "sinners" and the "wicked" is certainly moralistic. He speaks of the "sinners" who ". . . again and again miss God's way," while he insists that "the wicked oppose it in accordance with the basic attitudes of their constitution."[1] The"wicked" deliberately persist in impurity of heart, so that, while the way to God is not closed to the"wicked" from God's side, ". . .it is closed from the side of the"wicked"themselves. For in distinction from the sinners they do

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[1]"Right and Wrong," Good and Evil, p. 59.

not wish to be able to turn."[1]

This is certainly a Pelagian view of man's ethical situation. It represents the final stage of radical evil described in the dualistic myths of Persia which he describes as:

> . . .man's endeavor to render the contradictory state, which has arisen in consequence of his lack of direction and his psuedo-decisions, bearable and even satisfying, by affirming this state, in the context of the total constitution of the personality, absolutely.[2]

It is certainly true that there are men who seem to be resolute in their wickedness, yet surely the doctrine of grace might remind us when we see them that but for the grace of God we might be going upon their way; thus we ought to feel compassion for them even as we combat their influence in human affairs.

Despite Buber's views of the "wicked," he is not moralistic. There is a hasidic tale which illustrates his awareness of the danger of moralism. He tells of a hasidic master who was being visited by another zaddik who urged him to admonish some members of the community who were behaving like the "enlightened" groups by violating the law.

> "Admonishing is not the custom here," replied the zaddik, "When I face my congregation on the sabbath and say the prayer: 'All shall thank thee and shall praise thee,' those are our words of admonition. If they fail to rouse a man to the turning moralizing will not do any good."[3]

Furthermore, in his article on "Love of God and Love of One's Neighbor," Buber clearly repudiates any trace of moralism by showing that on the level

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[1] Ibid., p. 60.

[2] Buber, "Images," ibid., pp. 139f.

[3] Buber, "Moralizing," The Later Masters, p. 221.

where the ethical and the religious merge, there can be no absolute distinctions between men, and that even the "wicked" have their moments. Man must not be fastidious (in rejecting the "wicked") where God is not. In illustration of this point, there is the story of the drunken peasant who insistently annoyed a zaddik at midnight by rapping at his window and demanding admittance. Yet the zaddik reflected that if God suffers him in His world he too, ought to suffer him in his, and he let him in and prepared a bed for him. In similar fashion this same zaddik gave an infamous person all the money he possessed and was rebuked for this by his disciples. He answered that although he himself was not good, God gave him all he needed.[1]

In words strikingly reminiscent of a passage in the Sermon on the Mount,[2] Buber sums up this hasidic teaching: "God wastes his love even on the most wicked; how then may man manage his own with rigid accounting according to honour and merit!"[3] He adds that the highest level, the one upon which the integration of the ethical into the religious has reached its climax, is the loving of one's enemies.[4]

Thus, Buber sees the doctrine of grace adequately in theoretical terms, and he sees the need to combat moralism in practical terms. What he fails to see is the intimate connection between the two. For this reason, he mistakenly claims that Pauline theologians who are greatly concerned with

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[1]Buber, "Love of One's Neighbor," Hasidism, pp. 179f.

[2]Matt. 6:43-48.

[3]"Love of One's Neighbor," Hasidism, p. 180.

[4]Ibid., pp. 181f.

original sin and doctrines of grace weaken man's sense of freedom. He fails to see that just as freedom is central to his prophetic role because of the hortatory power of statements of human freedom, so too,writings on grace and original sin are most practical to those who would caution men against superior and self-righteous attitudes. Indeed, all moral thinking which speaks to the full dimension of the human situation must validate itself by employing a pragmatic criterion, namely, does it emphasize man's responsibility in freedom on the one hand, while checking his self-righteous pretenses on the other?

Buber, as we have noted, bases a major part of his ethical thought on the teachings of the prophets, and their optimistic view of the power of human willing has colored his thought. He does know the somber side of existence, speaking as he has of ". . .the old story that in the world of men the shell ever prevails against the kernel,"[1] and of "the cruel antitheticalness of existence itself."[2] Yet he regards the somber aspects of existence as remediable by human striving not, to be sure, without God's cooperation, but we cannot forget his declaration that "God waits for man."[3] By contrast, a thinker like Niebuhr who focuses on the writings of St. Paul with their all but despairing attitude toward the human will would naturally see more pain in the paradoxes involved in existence and would focus more upon the anguish in the human situation. A final illustration of this difference in tone is provided by their attitudes toward the man who has

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[1]Buber, "Spirit and Body," Hasidism, p. 73.

[2]Martin Buber, For the Sake of Heaven, trans. Ludwig Lewisohn (2nd. ed.; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1953), p. x.

[3]Buber, "Spinoza," Hasidism, p. 109. (my underlining).

turned to God.

Niebuhr feels that man must ever recognize himself as a sinner before God. He sees a great danger to the Christian who has experienced grace—relaxation of the tension that comes from the recognition that all one's achievements are tainted with sin and all one's virtues are attributable to grace. While not unqualifiedly certain that Paul intended his strictures against himself as a sinner to apply after his conversion just as much as they did before it, he is quite certain that they should have been so intended.[1] ". . .ages of Christian experience were required to disclose that a righteousness 'by grace' may lead to new forms of Pharisaism if it does not recognize that forgiveness is as necessary at the end as at the beginning of the Christian life."[2]

Buber certainly reveals a marked difference in tone when he discusses the man who has unified his soul, who is comparable to Niebuhr's description of the man who has experienced grace. Buber states that the unification of the soul, the turning, is a process which is never final: "Just as a soul most unitary from birth is sometimes beset by inner difficulties, thus even a soul most powerfully struggling for unity can never completely achieve it."[3] But instead of emphasizing, as Niebuhr would, the grave perils to the soul that imagines that its unity is more complete than is actually the case, Buber goes on to say:

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[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, II, 105f.

[2] Ibid., p. 105.

[3] The Way of Man, p. 26.

But any work that I do with a united soul reacts upon my soul, acts in the direction of new and greater unification, leads me, through all sorts of detours, to a steadier unity than the preceding one. Thus man ultimately reaches a point where he can rely upon his soul, because its unity is now so great that it overcomes contradiction with effortless ease. Vigilance, of course, is necessary even then, but it is a relaxed vigilance.[1]

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[1] Ibid.

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